

THE SPORT
OF OUR ANCESTORS



THE FOX.

BEING A COLLECTION OF PROSE AND VERSE
SETTING FORTH
THE SPORT OF FOX-HUNTING
AS THEY KNEW IT

EDITED AND SELECTED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATIONS
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PREFACE

BY the ‘Sport of our Ancestors’ is meant the sport of Fox-hunting. Anything to do with Sport has always been so popular in these islands that the word is now used to dignify almost anything in the nature of a competition, being applied to golf, football, lawn-tennis, hockey, or battledore and shuttlecock. But perhaps a better testimony to the supreme value of the idea of Sport in the Englishman’s mind is the natural way in which he designates as a good sportsman any one whom he particularly wishes to praise. No man can have greater honour in this country than to be known as a good sportsman, or, in the vernacular of those who are regardless of grammar, as a ‘Sport.’ He may achieve this reputation without ever having been on a horse or handled a gun or a fishing-rod. But he must possess a sense of humour and, above all, an ability to take risks and to play for his side. These attributes, added, of course, to a certain standard of kindness and good conduct, are what distinguish the good sportsman or ‘Sport’ among his fellows.

But for the purpose of these papers the term Sport will be only applied to field sports, meaning the pursuit of wild

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animals by man. And of all field sports it can be claimed that the pursuit of wild animals by packs of Hounds served in the field by men mounted on horses is the most exhilarating, the most varied, and therefore the most attractive. In France, whence came the Norman who probably taught us English to love Sport for its own sake, they hunt with packs of Hounds many different kinds of game. In England the vast majority of packs hunt the Fox. Hunting the Fox, then, is the Sport of our Ancestors. Long may it be preserved for our posterity!

Willoughby de Broke.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE songs and the chapters which are illustrated in this book by Mr. G. D. Armour's unrivalled pencil have been chosen mainly on account of the manner in which they signify the deliberate, matter-of-course, almost leisurely, but none the less whole-hearted, devotion to Fox-hunting which was once the distinguishing characteristic of the country gentlemen of England. The spacious days of country life from A.D. 1750, when Foxhounds began to be bred for speed, to A.D. 1900, when wars and rumours of wars both at home and abroad heralded the birth of a more hectic existence, must have afforded some rare moments. The culminating point of the comfortable England that some of us have been privileged to enjoy may fairly be said to have been reached at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Then came the Boer War, and with it the first twinges of the suspicion that after all we might have more trouble and less junketing in days to come. Some of us began to feel a draught. It is true that peace was arranged in time for the Coronation of King Edward VII. ; but the short reign of that popular monarch witnessed the final flicker of the luxury and leisure that had for so many generations made the life of comfortable England in the country the easiest

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of all forms of existence that this planet has produced. But during these first years of the twentieth century signs were not wanting that peace at home and abroad might come to an end. Life became more restless. Party feeling was bitter. There was incitement to class warfare. There was much shouting on the platform. The very Constitution in Church and State was called into question. No thoughtful person could ignore the German menace. And all the time the automobile in the hunting-field was causing grave searchings of heart among the conservative temperaments.

And not without some reason. Certain aspects of Fox-hunting have never been quite the same since self-propelled traffic took possession of our country roads. The most plausible defence of hunting by motor-car is that the time saved in this manner can be profitably devoted to the transaction of business, domestic or otherwise. When people say this, they probably mean that the time can be comfortably devoted to lying in bed. But granted that the busy man can leave the door at 10.15 A.M. in a motor-car instead of at 9.30 A.M. in a carriage, is there much real saving of tissue? The time between 9.30 A.M. and 10.15 A.M. might be more restfully spent in the phaeton or the buggy than in talking on the telephone, interviewing the agent, or composing letters to creditors. But whether one goes to the meet in a motor-car, in a carriage, or on horseback is entirely a question of taste. Although a motor-car in the hunting-field is sadly out of the picture, its use as a covert hack has had no real effect on the sport. But it has probably had some

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effect upon the sportsman. All boys and girls ought to learn how to jog their hunters quietly to the meet, how to ride them all day with a view to having to get them home at night, and how to get them home after a hard day. Until they have done all these things, and done them in the right way, they are not fit to be called Fox-hunters, or to have horses of their own. Experience is the best school. But the tendency of motor transport is to rob the young generation of this experience. Horse-mastership is left to the servants, and as soon as the fur coat, the thermos bottle, and the car can be found by telephone or otherwise, the horse is handed over to the groom to get home in the best way he can. Equally, the fatal facility with which the motor-car covers long distances to the meet, not previously attempted, may very well make people a little careless about asking their men and horses to cover these same distances, starting while their masters are in bed.

But this is not all. The general use of mechanical transport on the public roads has caused them to be treated in such a manner as to make riding on them a real danger, a far worse one than jumping the fences. No horse, however quiet, can travel to-day on the glazed surface of our roads without being in constant danger of slipping up, breaking his rider's leg, and very likely injuring himself. This with a quiet horse. To mount a horse that is inclined to jump about on these hard, black, shiny, slippery superficies requires courage of no mean order. It was bad enough to have to get on to a snorting animal in the old days before

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the roads were polished and burnished as they are to-day. The road was even then a hard place to fall on, but at least there was foothold for the horse when he began to dance. In the present state of the roads any movement at all, unless it be a very slow walk, is almost suicidal. The casualty list is already formidable. But when one has got to the meet without disaster by the aid of short cuts and grass sidings to the roads—though what happens in some countries where there are no grass sidings is terrible to contemplate—what becomes of our good old friend the turnpike road, who has so often enabled us all to save our horses during the run, and to see so many Foxes killed? It has been turned into a sheet of ice, hard, hideous, and convex, more death-dealing than the stiffest of timber or the blindest of ditches.

The motor-car, then, seems to have made Fox-hunting more of a luxury and less of a business, and has made riding on the turnpike road almost impossible. In a certain sense it has had more influence than the railway train as an accessory of the chase. A railroad is, of course, a horrible nuisance, and has spoilt many a good run, but the general effect of railways on Fox-hunting was so gradual that the change was hardly perceptible. Motor-cars, on the other hand, came in battalions, almost without warning, penetrated places where the railroad did not run, and marked a new era in the general outlook of the Fox-hunter, as they have marked a completely new era in the customs and indeed the manners of the nation.

It is with the object of recalling something of the spirit

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of an age when comfortable England was contented to think of sport rather than speed that these papers are now offered to the public.

Whether those boys and girls who first saw the light about the dawn of this century will enjoy field sports as much as did their ancestors is an open question. What is not an open question is that most of them, for the present at any rate, will enjoy them in a different manner, and from a different point of view. What is the nature of this difference ? The answer probably is that for some years past, even before the War, life was becoming more complex, particularly for the agricultural landlords, who for many generations had directed the field sports of the British Isles. The agricultural depression which began in the late seventies took away from many county families their hereditary privilege of being the chief financiers of Fox-hunting. Here and there one or two of the great houses whose revenues were perhaps independent of agricultural rents solemnly continued to keep on the family pack with no subscription, as if nothing had happened—or ever would happen. But many of the landlords had either to give up the mastership of Foxhounds altogether, or else to be paid a salary. Concurrently with the fall in revenue, political pressure began to occupy more of their time in public duty. They perceived that if they were to keep their influence, their service to the State could no longer be confined to having a good luncheon four times a year at Quarter Sessions, and sitting on the local Bench once a month on a non-hunting day. The whole para-

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phernalia of local government compelled their attention, if even from no other instinct than that of self-preservation. Parliamentary elections ceased to be a choice between a Whig and a Tory landlord ; the squire was opposed by the Radical, who was not ashamed to confess that he was out to demolish the existing order, and to lay his hands on the very Ark of the Covenant in the shape of the hereditary principle. The electors ceased to take things for granted. The spirit of that pleasant age indicated by the Eton boy who said, ‘Don’t bother about farming or politics ; all father’s tenants have to do is to walk a Foxhound puppy and vote for the Conservatives,’ was quickly passing. Leaflets, pamphlets, and all the other horrors of that terrible thing called propaganda were brought into full play. The comfortable evening at home had to give way, with distressing frequency, to the village meeting. A wise and witty Tory ‘grande dame’ is said to have remarked that unless this privation were cheerfully borne, ‘the eight o’clock dinner would ruin the Conservative Party.’

All these things, quite independently of war, combined to make life at the beginning of this century much more of a hustle than ever it had been before. Instances of the sealed pattern existence of the affluent country gentleman became very rare. In former times it had been his custom to change his seat of government from his country house to his London house on the same date every year. He purchased a commission for his eldest son in the Household Troops, or sent him into Parliament. The younger sons divided

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the family living, the army, and the navy between themselves, having received from their father a sufficient allowance to make them independent of their not too exacting professions. This arrangement formed a convenient setting for the enjoyment of field sports in the autumn and winter, and of other delights in the summer. It is true that there may have been a certain period of boredom for 'the sad Meltonian' in the spring. But this was shortly to be relieved by the festive Yeomanry Week, followed by the London season with Epsom, Ascot, Newmarket, and Goodwood, to say nothing of a country house cricket party, of all forms of junketing one of the most enchanting. The original picture from which this brief sketch is drawn of a certain aspect of leisured life is to be found in the novels of Whyte Melville, who knew the whole subject intimately, and must be accepted as an authority. It is not presented as the lament of *laudator temporis acti*, still less is it intended to be a defence of a social system as it manifested itself to some of us during a certain epoch. It is rather offered with the idea of trying to trace the change in the atmosphere of country life which was taking place during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. An amusing and touching symptom of the devout attitude of our ancestors towards field sports marks the contrast between the spirit of this period and that of the age that was passing. They thought it quite natural that even the Church should be the instrument for registering the public veneration for Fox-hunting and horsemanship. It may be within the memory

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of the oldest inhabitants of a certain parish that the meets of the Foxhounds were nailed upon the church door, if not actually announced from the pulpit by the good parson himself every Sunday. There is yet another instance even more naïve than this. The proud parish that had given birth to one of the finest sportsmen, and perhaps the most consummate horseman, of the Victorian era rang its church bells on the occasion of his riding the winner of the Grand National Steeplechase at Liverpool for the second year in succession. The man to whom was accorded this unique tribute was none other than the late Mr. J. Maunsell Richardson, who won the Grand National Steeplechase in 1873 on Disturbance, and in 1874 on Reugny, both of whom he had himself trained for Captain Machell.

Mr. Maunsell Richardson, who was born in 1846 and died in 1912, seemed to his contemporaries to be one of the fine flowers of English country life. Was he born at the right time to have enjoyed field sports at their very best? This question gives rise to much speculation. It is interesting to try to compare the respective environments of those sportsmen who were born about the twenties, the forties, and the sixties. Be it understood that such analysis as it is possible to make will be confined to the point of view of the leisured classes who in the last century were mainly recruited from the agricultural landlords. No apology is needed for talking about the leisured classes. Since the War, the acquisition of wealth and leisure, more often than not employed in the pursuit of game, seems to be just as

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fashionable an occupation as it was in the days of the Greeks and the Romans, and perhaps for many thousands of years before their time. Those who were born about 1820, possibly ten years earlier, to the unfettered and affluent enjoyment of field sports, and departed this life at the age of threescore years and ten, would almost seem to have skimmed the very cream of the English countryside. From the picturesque point of view they had the advantage of seeing what England looked like before the railroads. They saw with their own eyes the post-chaises, the private travelling carriages, and the stage-coaches, at that time in the very zenith of efficiency, so well described by 'Nimrod' in his famous chapter on 'The Road' which appears presently. From the sporting point of view there was little or nothing to hinder them from doing what they liked. The even tenor of their way received occasional shocks, such as the Reform Bill, the introduction of the railroad, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. On each of these occasions the world was without doubt coming to an end. But strange to say, in spite of these hideous portents, they contrived to enjoy those glorious gallops with Mr. Corbet and Mr. Osbaldeston, and the Fox-hunting parties at the great country houses. The contemporary portraits by pen and pencil give forth a delicious atmosphere of permanence, prosperity, and proprietorship. Sir Francis Grant has caught the spirit of the whole thing in such pictures as the Meet of the Cottesmore Hounds during the famous Mastership of Sir Richard Sutton. It is true that some of the Hounds look as if it would take

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them all their time to keep out of the way of the horses, even though the horses themselves may look a trifle 'coachy.' It would be interesting indeed to have heard Sir Richard's own criticisms when he first saw the picture. Anyway, however they may have been portrayed upon canvas, neither the horses nor the Hounds, unless they had been of the very best, would have satisfied such men as Sir Richard Sutton, Mr. Assheton Smith, the Duke of Rutland, and the other intimate enthusiasts who form this notable group. But the main merit of this picture does not consist in the faithful portrayal of animal anatomy, though we may remark in passing that few artists ever placed a man so easily and comfortably in his saddle as did Sir Francis Grant. His portraits are not of a man *on* his horse. They are of a man *and* his horse. Sir Richard Sutton and his horse appear in this portrait to fit each other so gracefully and naturally that it is hard to believe they could ever part company. The charm of this picture and of others like it, such as the Melton Hunt Breakfast, consists of the manner in which they convey the calm spirit of 'the gentlemen of England.' There is no suggestion of neurasthenia in the pictures of Sir Francis Grant. He groups and paints those men who met the Fox-hounds in the morning to ride over each other's land, and met together in the evening to drink each other's claret, as possessing an air of assurance, a power of command, a sense of property, a solidity of position, a freedom from worry, a distinction of manner, and a solemn, almost stodgy simplicity, which in those days must have been the traditional

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characteristics of the gentlemen who were sportsmen as well as men of substance. They and their kind were in a substantial majority in both Houses of Parliament. In his '*English Constitution*' Mr. Bagehot tells us that 'a cynical politician is said to have watched the long row of county members, so fresh and respectable-looking, and muttered, "By Jove ! they are the finest brute votes in Europe."'

'What will be your profession when you grow up ?' said the pompous family friend to a boy who was the younger son of a country parson. 'I don't know what it is called,' said the hopeful child, 'but it means living in the country, and keeping a lot of horses and dogs and things.' Pathetic, but quite English. This was the life. 'If I were as rich as Mr. Darcy,' cried young Master Lucas in '*Pride and Prejudice*', 'I would keep a pack of foxhounds, and drink a bottle of wine every day.' How many boys to-day would begin talking about a Rolls Royce ? One of the strokes of Surtees's pen portrait in '*Ask Mamma*' of the Earl of Ladythorne of Tantivy Castle, who was presumably born about the beginning of the last century, hits this existence very shrewdly. His lordship is out cub-hunting with his own Hounds, and is described as 'sitting among his blackthorn bushes like a gentleman in his opera stall, thinking now of the hunt, now of his dinner, now of what a good thing it was to be a lord, with a good digestion and plenty of cash, and nobody to comb his head.'

Now let us have a look at the next generation that began to be born about the beginning of the forties. In a certain

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sense they had in their youth an almost better time than their fathers. The Reform Bill and the Repeal of the Corn Laws had not really begun to make themselves felt either in or out of Parliament. There was a period of ease in the history of English country life, and indeed in political and foreign affairs generally, dating from the suppression of the Indian Mutiny in 1858 down to the beginning of the eighties, the like of which we may not enjoy again for many a long year. It is true that the glass began to fall in the political as well as the meteorological sense towards the end of this period. But the Eastern Question and the troubles in Afghanistan and South Africa, so intimately described in Mr. Buckle's '*Life of Disraeli*,' did not react upon the Fox-hunter. The wet seasons in the late seventies certainly hastened what the Protectionist pamphleteers of the day called 'the Curse of Cobden.' Landlord and tenant alike thought that the days of agriculture were numbered. But the wet seasons, distressing though they were to those who loved husbandry, were not without a queer kind of compensation to the actual sport itself in the field, although it should not be forgotten that in the long run the prosperity of Fox-hunting and of farming are linked together. The nature of this compensation resides in the fact that as a general rule a thoroughly well rain-soaked earth carries a good scent. 'I suppose we are all ruined,' exclaimed a noble lord who hunted his own Hounds, as after a good run he stamped into the ancestral hall in stained red coat and water-logged top-boots, the picture of a happy, if ruined, Englishman,

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‘ so we may as well enjoy ourselves out hunting as long as we can. There are no sheep in the fields to bother us, the country is all being laid down to grass, and, by Jove ! we are having a better scenting time than we have had for years.’

The country gentleman who came to man’s estate about A.D. 1860 cannot have been far from the golden age of Fox-hunting. In the matter of creature comforts he was better served than his father. The railroads, so far from having put a stop to hunting, as ‘ Nimrod ’ thought they would, became a positive convenience, without being sufficiently numerous to be a hindrance in the field. The Fox-hunter who wished to pursue deer, salmon, or grouse before the hunting season must have found it more comfortable to travel to Perth or Inverness in the train in twelve or eighteen hours than to undertake the same journey by the turnpike road. Sitting up all night in an ordinary railway carriage was not much fun, but in a few years the comfortable sleeping berth and its well-mannered groom of the chambers made the journey almost a luxury. This same railroad also enabled the member of Parliament to meet the Foxhounds within measurable distance of London after a night at Westminster, and unlocked to the Oxford undergraduates the pastures of Warwickshire and Buckinghamshire as alternatives to the groves of Waterperry and the thickets of Bagley Wood.

But there were other accessories of the Chase that contributed to remove certain disabilities under which the previous generation had suffered. There is hardly any record of a good run in the earlier part of the nineteenth century which

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does not contain some account of the horses getting tired. Sometimes they died, sometimes it was thought necessary to bleed them, sometimes they had to be left out for the night. Such distressing accompaniments to a day's pleasure may be accounted for by the lack of drainage and the consequent heavy going, as well as by the fact that in those days horse-masters had still a lot to learn. Clipping must have been a very difficult problem before the clipping machine was invented. Hunters in some stables were shaved with the razor, but no doubt their coats were allowed to grow very late in the autumn in order to postpone such a desperate operation as late as possible, in the hope that it might not have to be repeated before the end of the season. Now there is nothing that handicaps a hunter more than a long coat. His coat begins to grow in the autumn, at the very time when the pores of his skin should be free to give him every possible advantage while the process of conditioning is being carried out. It is not too much to say that the invention of the clipping machine was something like a revolution in the science of horse-mastership. If a gentleman with a stud of hunters were obliged to forgo either his clipping machine or his motor-car, he would have to keep the clipping machine and let the other go if he wanted to enjoy himself out hunting. And the art of the blacksmith was all this time improving. We do not hear nearly so much of the vexation of casting shoes. In reading the history of the bygone age it would almost seem to be a matter of even betting whether a hunter kept all his shoes on all day or not. The drainless

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ground no doubt contributed to this drawback. On the other hand, it may be urged with some truth that an earth unturned by surface drains carried a better scent than after it was disturbed. But if we put into the scale the pain and grief of riding an unclipped horse over undrained land against the exquisite sensation of riding a clean-skinned horse over sound pasture, the balance must surely be in favour of the latter, even though scent may not have served so consistently as in former times. This sensation may perhaps be enhanced by the fact that the hairs and the sweat of a curly-coated smoking steed are disastrous to the comfort and personal appearance of the rider. John Gilpin must have been in a nice mess long before he got to Ware.

We may claim, then, that the soundness of the pastures, and the general advance in the science of horse-mastership, made riding over the country more delightful than ever. Add to these things the glorious thought that barbed wire and patent manures were only in their infancy, and you have an environment for Fox-hunting that no other age has equalled. And who were the exponents of the art of the Chase in those days? Many of them were men of marked talent and renown. The sixties and seventies and the early eighties enjoyed the last ten years of the ripe experience of Lord Henry Bentinck, perhaps the greatest master of Fox-hounds of the nineteenth century. They witnessed the early part of the career of Tom Firr, perhaps the greatest professional huntsman of all time. The Lord Worcester of the day, then in the prime of his health and strength, was

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laying the foundation of his great reputation among the amateurs. Lord Willoughby de Broke was restoring to the Warwickshire country the fame that it had once enjoyed in the days of Mr. Corbet and Lord Middleton. Mr. Preston Rawsley was handling his Foxes after many fine runs over the wolds of Lincolnshire. Among the professional huntsmen such men as Frank Gillard, Will Goodall, George Carter, Frank Beers, Will Dale, and Nimrod Long were at their very best. All these men seemed to have one thing in common which may be worth noting, and it is this : each of them brought to his profession a presence and personality which will stamp them for ever in the memory of those who knew them. There was nothing nondescript or insignificant about any of them. Each of them would probably have been a credit to any other walk of life. Some one may say that brave men lived before Agamemnon, and that the preceding generation had heroes as great as these. Our purpose is to present the age in which they flourished as the Golden Age of Fox-hunting, and we have mentioned their names to prove that the period 1860-1885 will bear comparison with any other in regard to famous masters and huntsmen.

There remains to be considered the outlook of those members of ' the governing classes ' who began this mortal life at some time during the decade 1865-1875. In a sense they have had the most interesting life of all, packed with experiences. Born to influence and prosperity, they have witnessed many transitions. They have enjoyed the very apotheosis of comfortable and luxurious England. They

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have felt, and are still feeling, the vertical breeze of political and economic upheaval. They have seen war. But to those who have the gift of extracting charm from memory, their greatest treasure is the link they can preserve with that picturesque country life of which their grandfathers could tell them. Some of them, for instance, had the rare privilege of taking their first lessons in driving four horses from the men of old time who had driven the mail coaches. We ourselves made our first attempt at coaching in London under the master eye of the late Mr. Charles Ward, who drove the Exeter Telegraph. As boys and girls they had a glimpse of the placid county society of the undiluted mid-Victorian type, before its character was destroyed by the multiplication of quick trains up to London, automobiles, kodaks, telephones, and week-end parties. The atmosphere of Eton and Oxford was much the same as it had been in the time of their fathers, particularly the Eton of Dr. Hornby. There was a very slight draught, almost imperceptible, when Dr. Warre of revered memory succeeded Dr. Hornby, the effect of which can only be appreciated by those who were at Eton when the change took place. The nature of the change was the substitution of a certain flavour of the orderly room for the dignified, flexible, country-house compromise that prevailed when Hornby was headmaster. At Oxford the Bullingdon, Fox-hunting, steeple-chasing set was still flourishing. Those who went to Oxford at any time, say, between 1885 and 1895 found it to be exactly the place their fathers had described. The very henchmen

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who had ministered to the sport of their ancestors were literally waiting at the door to welcome them. Fox-hunting was almost a recognised part of the system. One mild morning in November, a freshman was summoned to the carpet of the head of his college. His foot was in the stirrup when the message arrived, so he obeyed the summons forthwith in his new red coat, new top-boots, and still newer cap and gown. 'Sir,' said he, 'I am just starting for hunting, and if I do not start now, I shall be late.' 'When I was an undergraduate at this college,' said the courteous old doctor of divinity, ignoring with fine taste the unusual costume, 'I was the only one who did not hunt. I do not know much about hunting, but I do know that it is an offence to be late for the meet. Run away now, and come to see me to-morrow.' A triumph for the Sport of our Ancestors ! The childhood, then, of the generation born about 1870 could preserve some live links with the coaching days ; its adolescence was passed in an environment essentially the same as that of the previous generation ; its manhood, until 1914, was destined to reach the high-water mark of creature comforts. It has been said that the zenith of the British Empire was reached at the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and that since that time England has been coming back to her horses. But whatever was happening to the Empire, comfort and convenience, and everything that makes for luxury, steadily increased until the outbreak of the War. Aseptics and anaesthetics, sanitation, transport, communication, the best of everything at a comparatively

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cheap rate ; all these things combined to place the earlier years of the twentieth century in a class by themselves. There were pinpricks, already indicated at the beginning of this chapter. In some counties there was too much barbed wire ; in all counties there were too many political meetings. But it is just possible that to enjoy a good run in spite of these things almost added to the zest of Fox-hunting. In reading a Limehouse speech about ourselves, do not let us forget how Joseph Surface reminded Lady Teazle that if one is to be the centre of a scandal there is no consolation like having done something to deserve it. But what of their sport ? Before they left school, Parliament, while Mr. Gladstone was Prime Minister, had passed the Ground Game Act. It has never been quite certain what was the real object of the promoters of this measure. Was it an attempt to increase agricultural production by decreasing the head of ground game ? Or was it an attack upon the patriarchal system ? We are concerned with the results rather than motives. In so far as this Act has operated to diminish ground game it has been an unmitigated blessing to Fox-hunting. There is no doubt that the matter of riot gave our ancestors a very great deal of trouble. Beckford is full of it. Even the great Lord Henry Bentinck is much concerned to give minute directions as to how to wean his young Hounds from hares. Of course, Hounds may through generations of breeding have become steadier. At the same time they have less temptation in the way of riot. And not only do hares and rabbits cause Hounds to stare about instead of

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keeping their noses down, but they also foil the ground and spoil the scent. So this generation has an advantage in that there is to-day less distraction in the shape of riot, mainly as a result of the Ground Game Act : though if Mr. Gladstone and his friends had been told that they were ministering to the cause of Fox-hunting by passing it, they might have been very much astonished. In another direction the working of this Act has not been quite so useful. The privilege of killing hares and rabbits presented itself to some occupiers of land as the means of enlarging their opportunities for sport with the gun. So that on some holdings rabbits increased instead of being diminished, being encouraged to breed in stickheaps erected for the purpose. There are few greater nuisances in a hunting country than a stickheap. Vixen lay their cubs in them, and litters might easily be born, live, and die in a stickheap without ever being hunted, because in time the Foxes will dig a large earth under the wood, or take possession of the rabbit holes and defy the cleverest earthstopper that ever was bred. But the stickheap nuisance is more than compensated for by the first-mentioned result of the Act, namely, the great advantage of having got rid of so many hares. In certain countries in the Midlands you will hardly see a hare from one end of the season to another in places where our ancestors used to shoot them by the score.

We have now tried to sketch the respective environments of the three generations of country gentlemen who were born in the nineteenth century. Which of them

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had the best of it—the grandfather who was born about 1810, the father who was born about 1840, or the son who was born about 1870? We cannot give the award to the son. Quite apart from the social and political unrest that was pervading the quiet life of the country before the War, the War itself and its effects are not going to make the afternoon of his life any too cheerful. His great asset is the recollection of the sports and pastimes of his youth. ‘We are having rather a thin time now, old chap, but we have had a bit of the old, and thank goodness! no one can take it away from us,’ is the kind of remark that is made every day. Fox-hunting will revive, and the generation born about the beginning of this century will enjoy their lives just as keenly as English sportsmen can, but the setting will be different. We were speaking of their ancestors. Did the father born about 1840 or the grandfather born about 1810 have the better time? It is a nice point. On the whole we must decide in favour of the grandfather. Let us assume that he was born in 1810, and died at the age of seventy-six in 1886. From the point of view of an agricultural landlord and a Fox-hunter, he would have seen the fairest times that the nineteenth century could offer. He would have seen rural England as yet unscarred by railroads. He would have enjoyed later in life enough of modern comforts to make that life very pleasant. He would have seen what we have ventured to call the Golden Age of Fox-hunting, and would have left his son to compete with a diminished rent-roll, with agricultural depression, and with the spirit of a philosophy

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whose manifestations have been the incitement to class hatred and the passing of the Parliament Act. Yes, those country gentlemen who came of age when England was beginning to recover from her struggle with Napoleon, and died before she felt the full effect of her struggle with Germany, must have drawn a very lucky number. These years roughly correspond with the lives of Warburton, Whyte Melville, Bromley-Davenport, and Trollope, who are among the authors from whose works we have chosen specimens setting forth the Sport of our Ancestors.

CHAPTER II

AN APOLOGY TO MR. SURTEES

IN selecting anything in the nature of an anthology, the trouble is to know what to leave out. Some people who read books of this kind will think that if one of their pet classics is not here it should have been included, and something else that is here should have been omitted. Many will say quite naturally that no symposium of sporting authors can be complete unless Surtees is seated at the board. If we owe an apology to Surtees for not inviting him, we can equally claim that we are paying him the compliment of putting him in a class by himself. We take for granted that he is more widely read than any other sporting writer, and that to reprint one or two of the passages from his books that are most familiar would be a work of supererogation. Some of the gems in '*Handley Cross*' are such household words, and have become so hackneyed, that we have not the hardihood to dish them up again.

The correct title of this famous work is so seldom heard nowadays that it is necessary to say that by '*Handley Cross*' is meant that book now known by its colloquial or short title of '*Jorrocks*.' This short title or nickname is so universal that to talk of '*Handley Cross*' sounds almost affected, and would seem to savour of the phraseology of

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those people, if there be any left, who talk about '*The Times* Newspaper,' or 'The Euston Square Railway Station.' Yet it is a real pity if the dear old title of '*Handley Cross*' is to be lost. Why not call books at any rate by their proper names? And such a happy name as this! To any one with a spark of imagination it conjures up the whole spirit of comedy in a sporting country town. Surtees was clever at finding titles for his books as well as for his characters. What better titles could there be than '*Ask Mamma*' and '*Plain or Ringlets?*'? '*Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*' is rather wordy, and there is some excuse for cutting it down to plain '*Sponge*.' But after all, perhaps '*Handley Cross*' is justly called '*Jorrocks*,' because in the long run Surtees's claim to fame must rest on his invention of Mr. John Jorrocks. Other characters in his books, such as Mr. Sponge or Jawley-ford, are indeed cleverly drawn, but for downright, honest, straightforward portraiture there is nothing to touch this picture of the sporting grocer. It is original. The snobs and hangers-on and chalk sportsmen of the other books are vastly well, but we have met them before. Jorrocks he caught in the counting-house of Great Coram Street, and he shows us how the spirit of the Chase compelled the merchant to become a master of Foxhounds, in spite of his being a poor horseman with bow window, round thighs, and no nerve. There is no greater tribute to the fascination of Fox-hunting than the mental and physical suffering which some people will endure in its pursuit sooner than stop at home. Surtees must have ridden about a great deal with

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the rearguard of the hunt composed of the road, gate, and gap brigade. How well he understands the feelings of the funker ! And how kindly he expresses them when he makes Mr. Jorrocks soliloquise during a run. Here are two choice specimens. Mr. Jorrocks was alone with the hounds on the famous Cat and Custard Pot Day. (It will be remembered that James Pigg arrived at the meet drunk, and was sent home, while a suggestion from Harry Capper that a subscription should be raised for Pigg, with whom there seems to have been some sympathy, had the effect of dispersing the field.) No one to show him the way down bridle roads. ‘ “ 'Eavens be praised, 'ere 's a gate,” as his quick eye caught sight of one in the corner of the field.’ On another occasion he exclaims, ‘ What a huntsman I should be if it were not for the leaps.’ It would be interesting to know how many huntsmen have said, or at least thought, something of the kind. This last saying is intensely human, and is one of the best things in the book. It hits the feelings of the funker bang in the middle of the note. It gives with one touch nearly everything that has made Mr. Jorrocks a sportsman, vital, human, and enduring. For the old man understood all about Fox-hunting. In the back office of his tea-dealing establishment in London he had mastered the theory of the Chase by reading Beckford until he knew him backwards. He had seen something of the practice of the art in the hills of Surrey where there were not too many fences. Then he comes down to the stiffly enclosed vale of Sheepwash, and would give

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everything he is worth, Great Coram Street and all, to catch a fox without the assistance of Pigg ; and the one thing denied to him, rich, healthy, enthusiastic, well-versed in woodcraft, is just that little touch of resolution that is wanted to carry him over the fences, take him to his Hounds, and make him the proudest and happiest man in England. Laugh one must, yet there is a tear in the laughter. How on occasion he must have envied James Pigg his undeniable nerve, an attribute not to be bought with all the wealth of all the counting-houses in Europe.

His lack of nerve he could not control. He does not seem to have tried to control his fondness for port wine and brandy and water. Over-indulgence in the pleasures of the table was near to undoing him more than once, as, for instance, on the night when everything after dinner suddenly became oblivion until he was aroused by the cold water in the swimming bath at my Lord Bramber's of Ongar Castle. Perhaps it would be charitable to put this down to the manners and customs of the age in which he lived. But Mr. Jorrocks had another weakness, apparently common to other ages, which also nearly destroyed him. He could not resist the temptation of trying to get his name into print as a successful M.F.H. How edifying for his city associates to read of their merchant friend's career as M.F.H., and to see him handed down to posterity in the company of Musters and Meynell and Corbet ! The letter in which he invited the great Pomponius Ego to come down and write ' the puff direct ' is worth preserving.

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Here it is :—

‘ DEAR MR. HEGO,—If your intercourse with Dukes and other great guns o’ the world, leaves any margin for the doin’s of the pop-guns o’ the chase, I shall be werry ’appy if you will come here and take a look at our most provincial pack. In course I needn’t tell you that my ’ouse is not large enough to require a kiver ’ack to canter from the dinin’ to the drawin’-room, neither is the pack on a par with many you have seen ; but I can give you a good blow-out, both in the way of wittles and drink, and shall be ’appy to “ put you up,” as they say in the cut-me-downs, on as good a quad as I can, and show you sich sport as the country will afford. *Entre nous*, as we say in France, I want to be famous, and you know how to do it. In course *mum*’s the word.—Yours to serve,

‘ JOHN JORROCKS.

‘ P.S.—Compts. to Julius Seizeher and all the ancient Romans when you write.

‘ *To Pomponius Ego, Esq., Calais.*’

The acceptance to this invitation, the day’s hunting, and Pomponius Ego’s puff that appeared in the *Heavy Triumvirate* are all treated in Surtees’s most fortunate vein of burlesque. The anxious consultation between Jorrocks and Pigg as to the particular form of ‘ fake ’ to be employed to make certain of a run and a kill ; their decision to run a drag and shake a Fox out of a bag at the end of it ; the hideous uncertainty when it looked as if the man with the bag had failed to play the game ; the ultimate triumph ; the dinner at Diana Lodge ; the ill-bred disparagement of the whole thing by Pomponius Ego in his article, and the consequent chagrin of Mr. Jorrocks, are all well worth reading of again. It is generally accepted that Mr. Apperley

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(Nimrod) was the prototype of Pomponius Ego. Poor Mr. Apperley ! If he sate for the portrait the artist has been cruel. Nobody can have been nearly such an ass as Pomponius Ego. But to paint pleasing portraits with his pen was not characteristic of Surtees. With one or two exceptions, such as Squire Jovey Jessop in '*Plain or Ringlets?*' and Michael Hardy in '*Handley Cross*,' there is hardly a lovable character in the whole of his gallery. There is nothing gentle or noble about any of them. The Duke of Tergiversation in his social and private life was the slimmest of the slim, having at his command 'an engaging smile, well calculated to throw a stranger off his guard.' He would do you if he could. Politically he was a turncoat of the most versatile description, who was always ready to rat at a moment's notice if there was the slightest glimmer of office. If he had lived any time during the last fifty years, he would probably have begun his career as a Gladstonian Radical and finished it as a Die-Hard. The Earl of Scamperdale was a coarse and repellent backwoodsman who could not speak the truth if he tried. And so with all the others. You may search his books from end to end without finding a single individual, unless it were Lucy Glitters for the sake of her good looks, in whose society you would care to spend the evening. But the function of the satirist is not to manufacture characters like Jane Eyre. He is concerned with the petty and the sordid and the vulgar. And in doing so Surtees has made for himself a name which has already stood the test of three-quarters of a century, and bids fair

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to outlive most of his contemporaries. Mr. Jorrocks was the fine flower of his imagination, and perhaps the Pomponius Ego incident is one of the best illustrations of the character of Mr. Jorrocks.

‘*Handley Cross*’ probably has more readers than any of the other books. There is enough in it of different kinds to satisfy every one. Those who like the orange-peel and butter-slide sort of humour can revel in such incidents as Pigg in the melon frame, or Mr. Jorrocks calling Benjamin for hunting with the cold-water jug. For those who rejoice in burlesque there are, as well as the Pomponius Ego day, the several excursions of James Pigg and his master, Mr. Jorrocks’s lectures, and the sale of Xerxes to Captain Doleful. For the real lover of the Chase there is Michael Hardy’s day at the beginning of the book, one of the most fascinating descriptions of a run in the whole of fiction. But the whole spirit of ‘*Handley Cross*’ is the spirit of adventure which led the prosperous tea-dealer to become M.F.H. This same spirit also animated Mr. Romford, and is mainly responsible for the popularity of ‘*Mr. Romford’s Hounds*.’ One has a sneaking affection for Facey, in spite of the fact that he was a rogue and a poacher, because he was really devoted to Fox-hunting for its own sake. With another impostor, in the person of Mr. Sponge, one can have no sympathy. His one respectable accomplishment was his horsemanship. Yet ‘*Mr. Sponge’s Sporting Tour*’ can be read with pleasure by any one who has a sense of humour, and who likes to study the manners and customs of the mid-Victorian epoch. The

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various places where Mr. Sponge got himself invited to stay, and the difficulty that all his hosts and hostesses had to get rid of him, are described by the hand of one who was a master in setting forth the snobbishness to which human nature can sometimes stoop. Surtees's description of Sponge's visit to Jawleyford Court is admitted by many good judges who have never been out hunting in their lives to be the very best of its kind. His portrait of Jawleyford is a masterpiece. He takes less time to paint Jawleyford than he takes to paint Jorrocks. Jorrocks occupies a whole book, like Tom Jones. Jawleyford with his shoddy picture gallery, his rabbit-pie luncheon, his frock-coated address to the tenantry, his sour claret, his false good fellowship, and his weakness for a title, are all done with the greatest ease in some half-dozen chapters. It is difficult to say which of the facets of Sponge's visit to Jawleyford Court is the most amusing. Our own choice is the wet morning in the art gallery. It would be sacrilege to try to describe it. The frames of mind of host and guest cannot be better indicated than by the books they were reading. Jawleyford, as a sacrifice to cultivation, had been reading Disraeli's '*Lord George Bentinck*,' though it is doubtful if he understood it. Still, it was the book of the day that should be on every gentleman's table, even if the leaves were uncut. Sponge's pursuit of literature was confined to a close study of the invaluable '*Mogg's Cab Fares*.' From this promising antithesis of outlook the author gives us a comedy scene which must be read to be appreciated.

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‘*Ask Mamma*’ is quite as good a comedy of manners as ‘*Mr. Sponge’s Sporting Tour*.’ The central figure is Billy Pringle, reputed to be the richest commoner in England. His mother had been a lady’s maid, and wore a ruby ring which ‘that gallant old philanthropist’ the Earl of Ladythorne of Tantivy Castle had slipped upon her finger as he met her (accidentally of course) in the passage early one morning at the house of her employer Lady Delacey. As the widow Pringle she lived in Curtain Crescent—not Pimlico, but Belgravia—and his lordship’s saddle-horses might often be seen tossing their heads in front of her door on a summer’s afternoon. Billy was launched into society by a hunting visit to Tantivy Castle. The description of the Earl and his castle is one of Mr. Surtees’s best, and after allowing for the exaggeration which the author admits in his preface, is an indication of what really could be done, and perhaps was done, in the stately homes of England before the days of the illustrated penny press. There was no Countess of Ladythorne. It was the reigning favourite who dispensed the honours of the castle to such of the local toadies as would accept them; his lordship drove her to the meet in his carriage and four, and would then exchange her society for that of the famous coquette Miss de Glancy, whom he piloted and made love to in the hunting-field. This was the wicked old gentleman whom good Queen Victoria had in her innocence made Lord-Lieutenant of Featherbedfordshire. Billy’s account of the establishment in his letters to his mother, and his mother’s answers, full

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of backstairs worldly wisdom, and advice as to the different way he should behave were he in a nobleman's castle or in the house of a commoner, should on no account be missed.

Mrs. Pringle writes to her son in a manner which is almost Chesterfieldian, and displays an acquaintance with the manners and customs of the servants hardly less intimate than that of Dean Swift. In one respect she will gain our sympathy more readily than Lord Chesterfield. He despised Fox-hunting, saying that it was only fit for bumpkins and boobies. Mrs. Pringle knew better. She despised every sport except Fox-hunting. Her ideas about Fox-hunting were rather vague, but her instinct told her that 'the best introduction for a young man of fortune was at the covert side.' But Billy did not exactly enjoy his first day's hunting. He was not only thoroughly frightened, but suffered sharply from loss of cuticle ; and wrote to his mamma suggesting that he should leave the castle before losing any more. She did not wish him to outstay his welcome there, but was determined that he should become a Fox-hunter. So she wrote to him regarding the length of his visit, and also knew well how to appeal to his love of clothes in order that he might be induced to stick to the hunting-field, and so get himself on in the world. Her letter will bear quoting. The opening of it will be better understood if one remembers that on arriving at the castle Billy had mistaken the groom of the chambers for the Earl.

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‘ 25 CURTAIN CRESCENT,
‘ BELGRAVE SQUARE, LONDON.

‘ MY OWN DEAREST WILLIAM,—I was overjoyed, my own darling, to receive your kind letter, and hear that you had arrived safe, and found his Lordship so kind and agreeable. I thought you had known him by sight, or I would have prevented your making the mistake by describing him to you. However, there is no harm done. In a general way, the great man of the place is oftentimes the least.—The most accessible, that is to say. The Earl is an excellent, kind-hearted man, and it will do you great good among your companions to be known to be intimate with him, for I can assure you it is not every one he takes up with. Of course, there are people who abuse him, and say he is this and that, and so on ; but you must take people—especially great ones—as you find them in this world ; and he is quite as good as his whites of their eyes turning-up neighbours. Don’t, however, presume on his kindness by attempting to stay beyond what he presses you to do, for two short visits tell better than one long one, looking as though you had been approved of. You can easily find out from the butler or the groom of the chambers, or some of the upper servants, how long you are expected to stay, or perhaps some of the guests can tell you how long they are invited for.

‘ I had written thus far when your second welcome letter arrived, and I can’t tell you how delighted I am to hear you are safe and well, though I’m sorry to hear you don’t like hunting, for I assure you it is the best of all possible sports, and there is none that admits of such elegant variety of costume.

‘ Look at a shooter—what a ragamuffin dress his is, hardly distinguishable from a keeper ; and yachters and cricketers might be taken for ticket-of-leave men. I should be very sorry indeed if you were not to persevere in your hunting ; for a red coat and leathers are quite your become, and there is none, in my opinion, in which a gentleman looks so well, or a snob so ill. Learning to hunt can’t be more disagreeable than learning to sail or smoke, and see how many hundreds—thousands I may say—overcome the difficulty every year, and blow their clouds, as they call them, on the quarterdeck,

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as though they had been born sailors with pipes in their mouths. Remember, if you can't manage to sit your horse, you'll be fit for nothing, but a seat in Parliament along with Captain Catlap and the other incurables. I can't think there can be much difficulty in the matter, judging from the lumpy wash-balley sort of men one hears talking about it. I should think if you had a horse of your own, you would be able to make better use. Whatever you do, however, have nothing to do with racing. It's only for rogues and people who have more money than they know what to do with, and to whom it doesn't matter whether they win or they lose. . . . No gentleman need expect to make money on the turf, for if you were to win they wouldn't pay you, whereas if you lose it's quite a different thing. One of the beauties of hunting is that people have no inducement to poison each other ; whereas in racing, from poisoning horses they have got to poisoning men, besides which one party must lose if the other is to win. Mutual advantage is impossible. Another thing if you were to win ever so, the trainer would always keep his little bill in advance of your gains, or he would be a very bad trainer.'

Before we leave him, we suggest that 'The Earl of Ladythorne of Tantivy Castle and Belvedere House, London' is one of the happiest titles in the whole of fiction, connoting as it does the gallantry, the gaiety, the 'glad eye,' the love of sport, and the hereditary wealth which were the attributes of the great nobleman who lived in an age when he could do what he liked with impunity.

From the castle Billy went to Major Yammerton, and thence to Sir Moses Mainchance, M.F.H. Major Yamerton was a pretentious little squire, and master of harriers, and might easily have stepped out of Thackeray's '*Book of Snobs.*' Sir Moses Mainchance's title speaks for itself. The whole book is full of wit and wisdom, sustained to the

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very last page. It also contains an interesting essay or two on farming in the forties and fifties, exemplified by the tenants on the estate that Sir Moses Mainchance had purchased. Mr. Leech's picture of Sir Moses interviewing Mrs. Turnbull in the hall at Pangburn Park on the rent day is one of the finest caricatures that even he ever drew ; and indeed the great artist's illustrations throughout the book are some of the finest examples of his craftsmanship, acknowledged more than once by the author in the pages of '*Ask Mamma.*'

Mr. Surtees has outlived many of his contemporaries, and is still full of running. '*Handley Cross*' may be said to have attained to the dignity of a classic. It is possible that Mr. Pickwick may have more acquaintances than Mr. Jorrocks. But Mr. Jorrocks is one of the master portraits in the Victorian gallery. If he is not, who is ? When one looks to-day at the bewildering mass of modern works in a railway station bookstall, one often wonders who reads them all, and if any of the characters portrayed in their pages will live in the mind's eye of our children in the same way that, say, Becky Sharp, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Jorrocks, Mrs. Proudie, Sir Willoughby Patterne, or Hetty Sorrel live in our own. These names are taken almost at random ; with many others they are lifelong friends and companions to those of us who have cultivated them. There are many modern authors who are entitled to profound gratitude for diverting the mind in the midst of the devastating worry of modern life. But do they appeal to us by their art of

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depicting an atmosphere and an environment, or do they get their effect by the delineation of personality and character? Mr. Surtees certainly succeeds in both ways. No one can deny his skill in penetrating character. And even the most serious student of the countryside of the last century will derive profit from reading his works. For our author had the great advantage of knowing his subject. He was himself a sportsman and country gentleman, being the owner of Hamsterley Hall, near Newcastle-on-Tyne. The date of his birth is not recorded in '*Burke's Landed Gentry*', but he was married in 1841, and died in 1864, so he saw the country pass through the shoals of Reform Bill, railways, and Repeal of the Corn Laws, into the smooth water of the fifties. He hunted with many English packs, as well as on the fells of Northumberland and Berwickshire. It must have been on these hunting tours that he met the prototypes from which he is believed to have modelled—not always too mercifully—some of the characters in his books. His style of writing is animated by a keen sense of the ridiculous, and fortified by an acute observation of the tendencies of the age in which he lived.

CHAPTER III

MR. EGERTON WARBURTON

ROWLAND EYLES EGERTON WARBURTON of Warburton and Arley in the county of Cheshire succeeded in the year 1813 to the estates, but not to the title, of his great-uncle, Sir Peter Warburton, fifth baronet of Arley. He was born in 1804 and died in 1891, and is known to posterity as the Poet Laureate of the Tarporley Hunt, and indeed of the county of Cheshire, for in addition to his '*Hunting-Songs*' he published '*Cheshire Ballads*,' a kind of Ingoldsby Legends of his own part of the world. He also wrote a book of '*Poems, Epigrams, and Sonnets*,' which probably has to-day very few readers. But his '*Hunting-Songs*' have survived. To reduce Fox-hunting to verse is a doubtful operation. But on the whole Mr. Warburton performs it as well as any other bard of the nineteenth century, and probably better than most of them. He has also preserved for posterity the convivial atmosphere of the Tarporley Hunt Club, founded in 1762. The home of this club is the Swan Inn at Tarporley, where much claret has been drunk by many generations of Smith-Barrys, Warburtons, Herons, Mainwarings, Davenports, Cholmondeleys, Leghs, and many other Cheshire families. They must have been jolly fellows, those Cheshire

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squires. Does not their own poet make them say so?

‘A Club of good fellows, we meet once a year.’

Then come their noble sentiments:—

‘We hold in abhorrence all vulpicide knaves
With their gins and their traps, and their velveteen slaves.

Since one fox on foot more diversion will bring
Than twice twenty thousand cock pheasants on wing,
That man we all honour, whate'er be his rank,
Whose heart heaves a sigh when his gorse is drawn blank.’

The Fox is the thing. Mr. Warburton sings of the undoubted superiority of hunting the Fox over deer-stalking, hare-hunting, otter-hunting, fishing, shooting, cock-fighting, and bull-fighting. It would be interesting if he had found time to devote a line to pig-sticking. Pig-sticking is the only field sport that might be favourably compared with Fox-hunting by people who have done both. Fox-hunting and pig-sticking alike produce a sensation that is afforded by no other field sport, namely, the sensation of pace. Other field sports, such as shooting on foot at dangerous game, have the excitement of taking risks, but do not produce the exhilaration of taking risks at full speed. It is true that there are occasions, such as running away from a wounded elephant, when full speed is the only thing. But this is done on foot, and pedestrianism, however nimble, cannot be compared with masterly equestrianism. Colonel John Buchan, in his very charming ‘*Memoir of Francis and Riversdale Grenfell*,’ quotes a letter from Francis to Riversdale,

Mr. Egerton Warburton

dated soon after the writer had exchanged into the 9th Lancers from the 60th.

Francis draws the comparison between foot and horse with the candour free from offence that seems to have been one of the most engaging characteristics of the twins : 'Of course, I find the riding chaps superior in the same way as we Fox-hunters think the huntsman superior to the gamekeeper. If you can't grip my meaning, it would take me so much time to explain that you would become weary, so I will leave you in darkness.' Isn't this delightful ? Francis Grenfell was right. No words, not even a Baconian essay, could make it clear to any one who had not the temperament, why riding, provided you know how to ride, is so vastly superior to walking. But it is. An advantage that the pig-sticker may legitimately claim over the Fox-hunter is that he does the deed himself instead of having to watch the huntsman doing, or trying to do it.

True, but in a day's Fox-hunting the adventure is by no means confined to the huntsman. The mere riding to Hounds is enough fun for most people. And the whole environment of Fox-hunting makes even a moderate day with the Foxhounds better than a good day at anything else. Riversdale Grenfell knew all about this. He had been to stay with Francis for a week's pig-sticking, and Colonel Buchan tells us that his diary records his disappointment :—

' Most of us came to the conclusion that even if the pig were there it could not be compared to fox-hunting. One wants to find a pig every fifteen minutes to make it really amusing. Another

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drawback to my mind is that when a party goes out, if one party enjoys it the other members have probably had no rides, and so been bored to death.'

Of course it is difficult to compare one sport with another, as each one has its own peculiar charm. Perhaps the acid test is the length of time for which one sport continues to be amusing. And in this regard Fox-hunting wins in a canter. One cannot imagine going out four or five times a week six or seven months in the year for any sport other than Fox-hunting. Pig-sticking for a fortnight or so every now and again, yes; but for six months without a break, no. If one were very fit and abstemious one might go out deer-stalking four or five times a week for a fortnight or three weeks without getting unduly stale and ceasing to enjoy it. But for six months . . . ? Deer-stalking indeed has something in common with Fox-hunting in that two stalks are never exactly the same. Yet, on the whole, one stalk is more like another stalk than one run with the Foxhounds is like another run. And the reason of this is that most runs bring a constant change of scenery. Sport on foot limits the outlook.

Deer-stalking is, however, the only field sport in the British Isles besides Fox-hunting that calls for anything like physical endurance. Trying to round up a wild covey of partridges in a grass country where all the fields seem to be not less than a hundred acres is certainly fatiguing and produces a most enviable thirst, but there is nothing in it approaching to exposure or distress. But certain phases of a day's deer-

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stalking can produce a colourable imitation of both these experiences. Of course nothing really matters, as one is certain to get home sooner or later to a comfortable shooting-lodge and all that it means. But while the exposure is actually proceeding it can be very real. By exposure we mean lying on a hill-top in a blizzard waiting for a stag to get up, or for a hind to feed away out of sight. The shivering agony may be intensified by having sweated freely in walking up the hill. After lying prone for a few moments, not uncommonly in the snow, the once warm flannel shirt becomes an icy-cold wet compress, the teeth chatter, the hands and feet become numb. Not even the thought of the hot bath and the smoking-room fire can sustain one, and we begin to wonder why we ever left the perfect temperature of the club-house in Pall Mall. Some such thoughts as these are also present to the mind during a stiff climb, particularly through long heather, the most trying of all things to walk in. A stag has been spied on the opposite slope of a corrie, whose Gaelic name translated into the English tongue is 'The Steep Corrie.' Ominous name! You are already high up and vainly hoping your stalker will let you walk round the top of the corrie and come in on him from above. It looks so easy, and above all so short. You would back yourself to do it in twenty minutes. It seems a shame to throw away the ascent you have already gained. You summon up courage to suggest your plan to the stalker, feeling all the time that it will be turned down. And so it is. You are told you must go right down to the foot of the

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corrie, cross the burn, and climb all the way up the opposite shoulder. You had rather a long walk the day before, and do not feel too fresh. You begin the descent, and keep wondering whether it is more distressing to go downhill than uphill. Going downhill is not so trying to the wind, but the legs seem to be made of paper, and to fold up under you. You almost welcome the thought of the climb that is before you, but when the climb begins you long for the descent once more. The first half-hour is through thick, long heather, which necessitates lifting each foot ever so high at every step. It would seem that wind and limb alike are now strained to the breaking-point, and you wish yourself anywhere else in the whole wide world. Is it worth it? Why spend all this money on the agony of stalking when you can sit in a chair at home free from pain, and for nothing? Is the stalker never going to stop? You almost begin to hate him. At last the heather gets shorter and gives way to moss and stones. The stalker only goes all the faster on the easier going; but just as the world seems to be coming to an end, he sits down on the very top, and you fling yourself on the ground beside him. Then come twenty minutes of the reptilian movement along the face of the hill in full view of some hinds, and presently the rifle is placed in your hands. If you kill, nothing matters. You eat your sandwiches and smoke your pipe, and the way home seems short and easy. But if you miss! Then indeed your luncheon is cheerless; you are very likely let in for another long walk to try for another stag, and every

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step on the long downward path home is pain and grief. But in any case all the suffering is forgotten in a very short time, and these are the very aches and pains that make the sport worth having.

There is less bodily distress about the ordinary day's Fox-hunting ; in these days of motor-cars there is hardly any. But no one is a real Fox-hunter unless he or she has been really hungry and tired, and in that condition has been obliged to ride, or perhaps to lead, a beaten horse home several miles in the dark in the face of a driving storm. This does not happen every day ; but the beauty of Fox-hunting as a mental stimulant is that hardly any day passes without your having the chance, if you choose to take it, to 'stiffen the sinews,' to 'summon up the blood,' to jump the fences, to think quickly, and to take decisions at full gallop. These are the privileges of any member of the field who is not afraid to exercise them, and form a great deal of the charm that compels people to follow the Hounds, even though they do not take any active part in the actual hunting of the animal.

But what shall we say of the man who hunts the Hounds, and on whose sagacity so much depends ? To the joy of horsemanship he adds the exercise of his craft. One of the most famous amateur huntsmen of the last century was wont to declare that in hunting a pack of Foxhounds the blanks were so many and the prizes so few that he really enjoyed himself on comparatively few days in the season ; but that even one day on which things went well made up

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for any amount of disappointments. And he was right. To take out a pack of Foxhounds, every one of whom you have bred and entered yourself ; to know that they will conform to the movements of your horse, and unless they are hunting a Fox will never fail to come to your horn and voice, and will, in fact, do everything that you ask them to do without any whipping-in ; to take them to a covert and hear them open on their Fox ; to see them fling themselves of their own accord to recover the scent when they have overrun it ; to help them out of one or two difficulties ; to see them run into the animal you have never set eyes on until you see him dead beat in the same field with the Hounds, and to enjoy all this from the back of a thorough-bred horse, are things that make life worth living.

It is a mild morning about the second week in January. The clouds are high. The long bents are nodding to a gentle southerly breeze. The air is moist and the distance clear, favourable for both sight and sound. This is the right atmosphere. It promotes a general sense of well-being. The razor behaves well ; the horn seems to sound of its own accord directly it is pressed to the lips ; leathers, saddle, reins, and gloves are supple and adhesive, so different from the stiff slippery things that they can be in the winds of March ; and on these warm, humid days the fox tires before the hounds more quickly than in cold, dry weather.

The meet is in the wilder and less fashionable part of the country, approached by roads that have hitherto escaped

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the attentions of the Road Board, so you order the phaeton and pair instead of the motor-car. There will not be more than seventy people out, so the meet will be more like a gathering of Fox-hunters and less than usual like a motor exhibition at Olympia. The crunch of the wheels, the tread of the horses, and the rattle of the pole-chains give forth the sweet music of long ago. You are to meet your hounds at the cross-roads two miles short of the advertised place, so that the tumultuous reception they always insist on giving you may not frighten the Fox out of the covert. Presently you see the small party of second-horse men with the horses drawn up in a rank on the grass siding. Jim has wisely withdrawn the hounds round the corner, so that you may mount in peace before they recognise you. 'Mr. Tiptop wishes you to ride the brown horse first, please,' says Tom, giving you a command you dare not disobey. The Hounds have now heard your voice, and crowd up to the corner to get a glimpse of you, only just restrained by Jim. The next moment they are all round and about, and greeting you with their joyous voices and fondly happy faces. And a rare moment it is. Some one at any rate is unfeignedly glad to see you, and is not ashamed to say so. 'Nineteen and a half, sir,' says Jim. Just the right number, fifteen couple of doghounds and four and a half couple of bitches. You turn your horse's head down the road, and the Hounds come with you, having suddenly become quite sedate now that they have said Good morning. It is not a good omen for scent when Hounds are frolicsome

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on the way to the meet, and go staring through the gateways and snuffing into the hedges. On a good scenting day each Hound usually keeps his place on the road, and goes solemnly to covert, looking neither to right nor left, as if he were saving himself for a hard day.

The covert you are going to draw is about fifty acres, carpeted with bracken dotted with patches of blackthorn and brambles, and sheltered by some old oaks and huge whitethorn trees. It was formerly an open heath on either side of the old London road, now overgrown with grass and forming a middle ride for the covert. The acoustics are so good this morning that Jim trots off from the meet to take post at the lodge on the new London road, in case the 'old customer' gets wind of the sport and steals away too soon. The Hounds 'watch him off,' as the stage directions say, and then look up into your face, wondering why you do not make a move. At last the stable-clock strikes eleven. They seem so cocksure of finding that they could be trusted to leave you where you are and draw the covert themselves. But you do not give them the office until you have crossed the park and are within a hundred yards of the covert. The ladies and gentlemen take the carriage drive, and you turn down the trig into the covert to join your Hounds. The anticipation of hearing the first Hound open can best be enjoyed alone with no one to bother you about politics and all the other worries you have come out to avoid.

There is not a Hound to be seen. The leading Hounds

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have probably gone straight to the Foxes' kennel, for at that moment one of the old doghounds proclaims with a deep hoarse roar that 'the game 's afoot.' This is quickly endorsed by the lighter tone of one of the bitches, and in less than two minutes they all have something to say. He leads them straight to the corner where Ted the second whipper-in is holloaing 'Forrard away' with all his might and main. Another Fox ! The boy might have saved his voice, for the pack swings to the left underneath the boundary fence, glued to the one they found. You hear your field holloaing him over the middle ride, and he sets his head for Jim's hiding-place at the lodge. The Hounds scream after him down the whole length of the covert, but in spite of this, he thinks he has gained enough ground by the turn in the covert to risk the open. Not only that, the Hounds, the horses' hoofs, and the horn are making an ugly demonstration in his rear. Jim now views him away over the new London road, and you sound the long blast more as an accompaniment to the chorus than as a summons to the open, and emerge through the lodge gates just as the last Hound is disappearing through the fence out of the road. 'All on,' says the well-trained servant, and you feel the good brown horse already balancing himself to jump the fence. He canters up the grassy slope, with his strong hocks underneath him, his head tucked into his chest, and his perfect mouth playing with the bit as he goes.

The country is undulating, being a mixture of plough

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and pasture covering a succession of small valleys, each with its own brook that in some cases is best crossed by the bridge. The fences are not too well cut and laid, and the rider has to pick his places. About three miles to the left front is a long, straggling, boggy woodland of about three hundred acres, usually full of Foxes. A gate or two, sundry pieces of low timber, and an easy place at each bottom keep you on terms with your Hounds until you breast the rising ground for the third time. On the top of the ridge there is a cart track, intersecting the line of the Fox. On this track stands a labourer, apparently the only inhabitant of the district. What is he doing there? He gesticulates as if he had seen the Fox, and you pray that the Fox has not seen him. But of course he has, and has turned short to the right, under the fence, down the cart track or horse road, as they call it in the Midlands. The Hounds have their blood up, and the body are through and over the fence and half-way across the next field before they own their mistake. But two couple make a dive to the right under the hedge, and throw their tongues. You holloa to the leading Hounds, who wheel to the right and conform to the change of direction, though as yet they have no scent. The Fox has re-made his point under the second hedge to the front, and, as the body of the pack on your left flank cross his line, they put down their sterns and slip up the hedge side like lightning, stealing an unhandsome march on the steady two couple who have saved the situation. You open the gate and let these faithful ones into the field,

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where they race away from you to join the head. It now looks as if you are committed to the woodland, and the practical certainty of changing Foxes. A gentleman who lives on the border tells you that the neighbouring pack were all over it only two days ago, so for once they may have done good by clearing it of Foxes. The Hounds hunt the line into it half-way between a road separating the woodland from an open heath and the middle ride. Jim takes the road, you take the middle ride. The scent is not quite so good. There is still a steady concentrated cry, but not much pace. Your heart sinks as the cry gets less and less and eventually 'peters out.' They must either be on the line of a Fox who has heard them coming, and has therefore been gone some time, or else their own Fox has turned. You have no alternative but to sit and suffer. After two minutes of devastating anxiety you are rewarded. First one and then another speaks, and then they all chime in again and chatter away nearly to the far end of the wood, but without going fast enough to press him. In the road you join Jim, who has not seen him. The Hounds carry the line into the road, and are brought to their noses. You open a gate out of the road and let the body of the pack through. You then turn your horse to the left, up wind towards the horses. If you go down wind first, the ladies and gentlemen will all follow you, and you will have a difficulty in getting back again if you do not hit it off. The up-wind attempt is on this occasion of no avail, and you turn back down the

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road. If the Fox has left the covert somewhere here he may be yours. If not . . . ? But you must have luck on some days, and to-day is one of them. The pack cluster together down a furrow in a ploughed field, and throw their tongues merrily on the grass beyond. Is he your original hunted Fox? This is one of the glorious uncertainties of the Chase. Anyway he is your hunted Fox now, and will have to look sharp to get out of the way.

The country becomes less provincial. Grass fields and well-laid fences. The next shelter the Fox may be heading for is a kind of amphitheatre or corrie, with a long, narrow, hanging covert running all round the head of it, and a small wood on each shoulder. This is his point, and the Hounds almost race there. They enter the long hanging covert: you ride along the lower edge. You can see all over it right up to the top fence. To-day does not seem to be a good scenting day in covert, or else the Fox is sinking, for now they can hardly own him. This last explanation is the true one, because you catch sight of him a hundred yards ahead of the Hounds, crawling along dead beaten just inside the top fence. The Hounds are all below him, and cannot wind him or see him. You daren't holloa, for if you did they would all come down to you and make matters worse. You would give the wide world for Jim or Ted to be level with you along the top to show him to them. But Ted has quite rightly lost his start from the woodland by hanging back and is not here, and Jim has rather rashly got too

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far ahead of you. There is only one thing to do. You must slip quietly back along the bottom, ride round and get on to the top, and so try to put them on to him. You canter away without their finding out, and are presently standing on the top where you last saw the Fox. They can't own the scent. He may have turned up over the top across a greasy wheat-field ; you hold them across it as a last chance, and your luck still serving you, you put him up out of the hedge where he has lain down. How he must hate you ! With that marvellous power of reserve which beaten Foxes seem to have, he blunders across the corner of the field back into the covert ; and there they catch him.

The reputation of Tar Wood is preserved by Mr. Warburton's description of this remarkable run which took place in 1845, during the mastership of Lord Redesdale, who had for his huntsman the celebrated Jem Hills. According to a Mr. Whippy who was out, it was a fifteen-mile point, and twenty miles as hounds ran, the whole thing being accomplished in one hour and forty-two minutes. With great respect we doubt whether this distance could have been covered in the time. In a stiffly enclosed country it certainly could not have been done. Even over the open downs and the stone walls of North Oxfordshire the feat is hardly within the bounds of possibility. But this has nothing to do with Mr. Warburton, who has immortalised the run in a lay that conjures up the wildness and mystery of the Chase, and makes the

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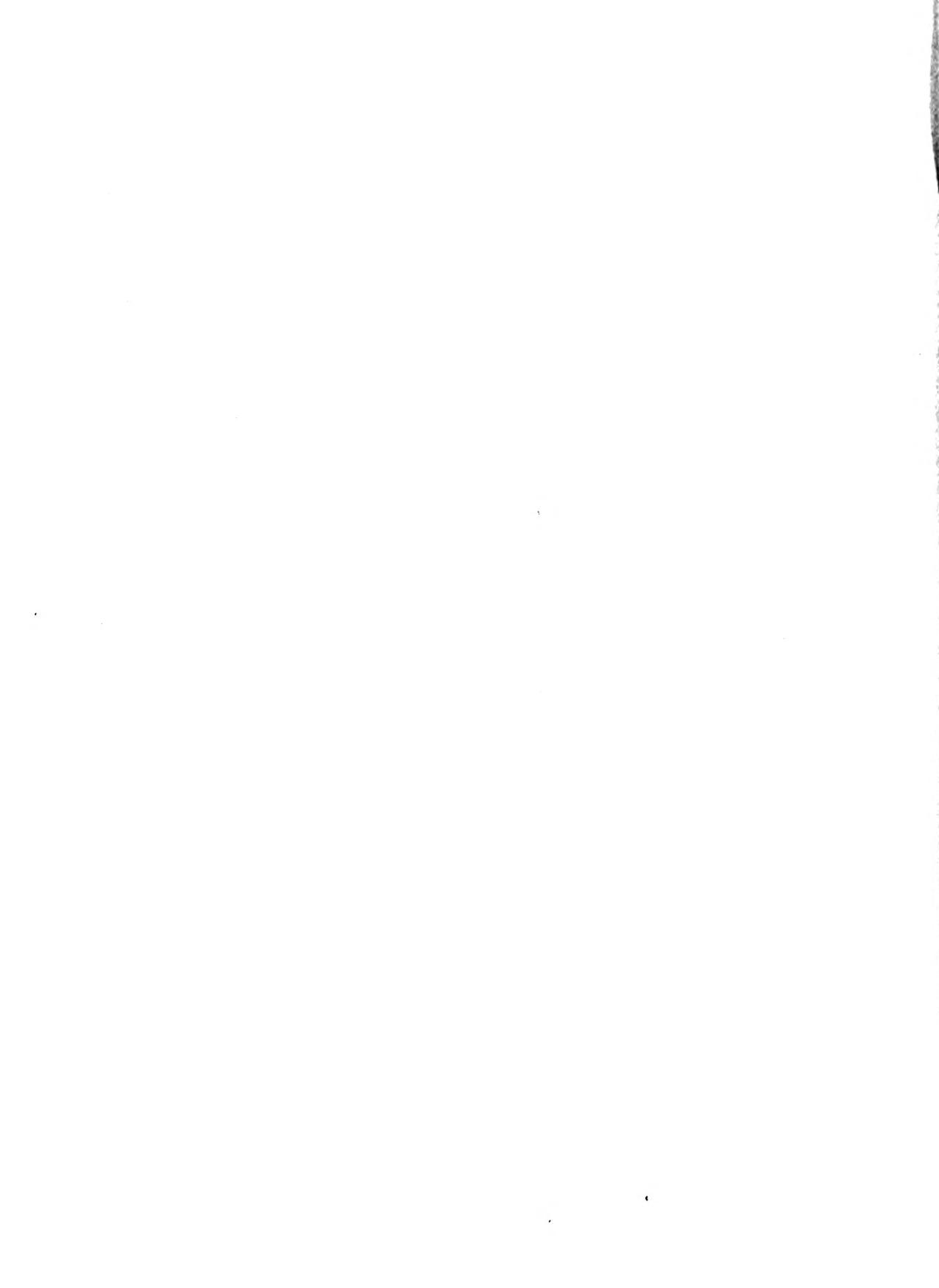
reader wish he had had the chance of seeing this fine run.

Lord Redesdale was one of the best friends to Fox-hunting that ever lived. It hurt his feelings so acutely to see any covert drawn blank that he is said to have instructed his agent to try to buy the covert in question for him in order that such a disaster might not happen again. He became master of, and in fact founded, the Heythrop Hounds when the sixth Duke of Beaufort relinquished his Oxfordshire country and withdrew to Badminton.

Jem Hills made his mark in the Midlands, and kept his post for thirty-two years. He is said to have introduced 'the quick forward cast' into the provinces, as practised by Mr. Osbaldeston in the Shires (*sic*). Whatever this may mean, neither Jem Hills nor Mr. Osbaldeston, nor any one else, could ever turn a bad scent into a good one by forcing the pace. It is possible that neither the hard riders at Melton nor the Oxford undergraduates cared very much or even knew whether the Hounds had a line or not, provided there was plenty of galloping and jumping. At any rate Jem Hills was very popular at the University. But the Tar Wood run was evidently an orthodox affair, and ranks as one of the classic days of the nineteenth century.



"BRIGHTER IN BREEZE THE CHAINS OF FORT DAUDET
"PEADS THE BEGONE CHARMED TO FOLD — THE FOOL."



Mr. Egerton Warburton

SONG

Stags in the forest lie, hares in the valley-o !
Web-footed otters are speared in the lochs ;
Beasts of the chase that are not worth a Tally-ho !
All are surpass'd by the gorse-cover fox !

Fishing, though pleasant,
I sing not at present,
Nor shooting the pheasant,
Nor fighting of cocks ;
Song shall declare a way
How to drive care away,
Pain and despair away,
Hunting the fox !

Bulls in gay Seville are led forth to slaughter, nor
Dames, in high rapture, the spectacle shocks ;
Brighter in Britain the charms of each daughter, nor
Dreads the bright charmer to follow the fox.

Spain may delight in
A sport so exciting ;
While 'stead of bullfighting
We fatten the ox ;
Song shall declare a way
How to drive care away,
Pain and despair away,
Hunting the fox !

England's green pastures are grazed in security,
Thanks to the Saxon who cared for our flocks !
He who, reserving the sport for futurity,
Sweeping our wolves away left us the fox.

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When joviality
Chafes formality,
When hospitality
 Cellars unlocks ;
Song shall declare a way
How to drive care away,
Pain and despair away,
 Hunting the fox.

TAR WOOD

(A RUN WITH THE HEYTHROP)

He waited not—he was not found—
 No warning note from eager hound,
But echo of the distant horn,
From outskirts of the cover borne,
Where Jack the Whip in ambush lay,
Proclaim'd that he was gone away.

Away ! ere yet that blast was blown,
The fox had o'er the meadow flown ;
Away ! away ! his flight he took,
Straight pointing for the Windrush brook !

The Miller, when he heard the pack,
Stood tiptoe on his loaded sack,
He view'd the fox across the flat,
And, needless signal, waved his hat ;
He saw him clear with easy stride
The stream by which the mill was plied ;
Like phantom fox he seem'd to fly,
With speed unearthly flitting by.



"STOOD TIP TOE ON HIS LOADED SACK."



Mr. Egerton Warburton

The road that leads to Witney town
He travell'd neither up nor down ;
But straight away, like arrow sped
From cloth yard bow, he shot a-head.
Now Cokethorpe on his left he past,
Now Duckington behind him cast,
Now by Bampton, now by Lew,
Now by Clanfield, on he flew ;
At Grafton now his course inclined,
And Kelmcote now is left behind !

Where waters of the Isis lave
The meadows with their classic wave,
O'er those wide meadows speeding on,
He near'd the bridgeway of St. John ;
He paused a moment on the bank,
His footsteps in the ripple sank,
He felt how cold, he saw how strong
The rapid river roll'd along ;
Then turn'd away, as if to say,
' All those who like to cross it may.'

The Huntsman, though he view'd him back,
View'd him too late to turn the pack,
Which o'er the tainted meadow prest,
And reach'd the river all abreast ;
In with one plunge, one billowy splash,
In—altogether—in they dash,
Together stem the wintry tide,
Then shake themselves on t' other side !
' Hark, hollo back ! ' that loud halloo
Then eager, and more eager grew,

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Till every hound, recrossing o'er,
Stoop'd forward to the scent once more ;
Nor further aid, throughout the day,
From Huntsman or from Whip had they.

Away ! away ! uncheck'd in pace,
O'er grass and fallow swept the chase ;
To hounds, to horses, or to men,
No child's play was the struggle then ;
A trespasser on Milward's ground,
He climb'd the pale that fenced it round ;
Then close by Little Hemel sped,
To Fairford pointing straight a-head,
Though now, the pack approaching nigh,
He heard his death-note in the cry ;
They view'd him, and now seem'd their race
The very lightning of the chase !
The fox had reached the Southropp Lane,
He strode to cross it, but in vain,
The pack roll'd o'er him in his stride,
And onward struggling still—he died.

This gallant fox, in Tar Wood found,
Had cross'd full twenty miles of ground ;
Had fought in cover, left or right,
No shelter to conceal his flight ;
But nigh two hours the open kept,
As stout a fox as ever stept !
That morning, in the saddle set,
A hundred men at Tar Wood met ;
The eager steeds which they bestrode
Paced, to and fro, the Witney road,

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For hard as iron shoe that trod
Its surface, the unyielding sod ;
They champ'd the bit and twitch'd the rein,
And paw'd the frozen earth in vain ;
Impatient with fleet foot to scour
The vale, each minute seem'd an hour,
Till mid-day fun had made the ground
Fit treading for the foot of hound ;
Still Rumour says of that array
Scarce ten lived fairly through the day.

Ah ! how shall I in song declare
The riders who were foremost there ?
A fit excuse how shall I find
For every rider left behind ?

Though Cokethorpe seem one open plain,
'Tis slash'd and sluiced with many a drain,
And he who clears those ditches wide
Must needs a goodly steed bestride.
From Bampton to the river's bounds
The race was run o'er pasture grounds ;
Yet many a horse of blood and bone
Was heard to cross it with a groan ;
For blackthorns stiff the fields divide
With watery ditch on either side.
By Lechlade's village fences rise
Of every sort and every size,
And frequent there the grievous fall
O'er slippery bank and crumbling wall ;
Some planted deep in cornfield stand,
A fix'd incumbrance on the land !

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While others prove o'er post and rail
The merits of the sliding scale.

Ah ! much it grieves the Muse to tell
At Clanfield how Valentia fell ;
He went, they say, like one bewitch'd,
Till headlong from the saddle pitch'd ;
There, reckless of the pain, he sigh'd
To think he might not onward ride ;
Though fallen from his pride of place,
His heart was following still the chase ;
He bade his many friends forbear
The proffer'd aid, nor tarry there ;
' Oh ! heed me not, but ride away !
The Tar Wood fox must die to-day ! '

Nor fell Valentia there alone,
There too in mid career was thrown
The Huntsman—in the breastplate swung
His heels—his body earthward hung ;
With many a tug at neck and mane,
Struggling he reach'd his feet again ;
Once more upon the back of Spangle,
His head and heels at proper angle
(Poor Spangle in a piteous plight),
He look'd around him, bolt upright,
Nor near nor far could succour see,—
Where can the faithless Juliet be ?
He would have given half his wage
Just then to see her on the stage ;
The pack those meads by Isis bound
Had reach'd ere Jem his Juliet found ;

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Well thence with such a prompter's aid
Till Reynard's death her part she play'd.

Then Isaac from the chase withdrew
(A horse is Isaac, not a Jew),
Outstretch'd his legs, and shook his back
Right glad to be relieved of Jack ;
And Jack, right glad his back to quit,
Gives Beatrice a benefit.

Moisture and mud the ' Fungus ' suit,
In boggy ditch he, taking root,
For minutes ten or thereabout,
Stood planted, till they pluck'd him out.
By application of spur rowel
Charles rubb'd him dry without a towel.

Say, as the pack by Kelmcote sped,
Say who those horsemen cloth'd in red ?
Spectators of the chase below,
Themselves no sign of movement show ;
No wonder—they were all aghast
To see the pace at which it past ;
The ' White Horse Vale '—well known to Fame
The pack to which it gives a name ;
And there they stood as if spellbound,
Their morning fox as yet unfound ;
Borne from that wood, their Huntsman's cheer
Drew many a Tar Wood straggler near,
And he who felt the pace too hot
There gladly sought a resting spot ;
Himself of that White Horse availing,
When conscious that his own was failing.

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Thus ships when they no more can bide
The fury of the wind and tide,
If chance some tranquil port they spy,
Where vessels safely shelter'd lie,
There seek a refuge from the gale,
Cast anchor, and let down the sail.

The speed of horse, the pluck of man,
They needed both, who led the van ;
This Holmes can tell, who through the day
Was ever foremost in the fray ;
And Holloway, with best intent,
Still shivering timber as he went ;
And Williams, clinging to the pack
As if the League were at his back ;
And Tollit, ready still to sell
The Nag that carried him so well.

A pretty sight at first to see
Young Pretyman on Modesty !
But Pretyman went on so fast,
That Modesty took fright at last ;
So bent was she to shun disgrace
That in the brook she hid her face ;
So bashful, that to drag her out
They fetch'd a team and tackle stout.

When younger men of lighter weight
Some tale of future sport relate,
Let Whippy show the brush he won,
And tell them of the Tar Wood run ;
While Rival's portrait, on the wall,
Shall oft to memory recall



"THEY FETCHED A TEAM AND TACKLED STOUT."



Mr. Egerton Warburton

The gallant fox, the burning scent,
The leaps they leapt, the pace they went ;
How *Whimsey* led the pack at first,
When Reynard from the woodside burst ;
How *Pamela*, a puppy hound,
First seized him, struggling on the ground ;
How *Prudence* shunn'd the taint of hare,
Taught young in life to have a care ;
How *Alderman*, a foxhound staunch,
Work'd well upon an empty paunch ;
How Squires were, following thee, upset,
Right honourable *Baronet* ;
How, as the pack by Lechlade flew,
Where close and thick the fences grew,
Three bitches led the tuneful throng,
All worthy of a place in song ;
Old *Fairplay* ne'er at skirting caught,
And *Pensive* speeding quick as thought ;
While *Handsome* proved the adage true,
They handsome are that handsome do !

Then long may courteous Redesdale live !
And oft his pack such gallops give !
Should fox again so stoutly run,
May I be there and see the fun !

1845.

CHAPTER IV

MAJOR WHYTE MELVILLE

DURING fifty-seven years of life, beginning in 1821, Major George John Whyte Melville saw more of hunting, soldiering, and fashion than most people. He entered the Coldstream Guards in 1839, and served with the Turkish Cavalry in the Crimean War. He knew every one in the British Isles who was worth knowing, and his novels were read by a considerable public as well as by a large circle of friends. He wrote verses as well as novels. Some of his contemporaries have gone so far as to call him the Poet Laureate of the hunting-field. Yet 'Drink, Puppy, Drink,' perhaps the best known of his hunting-songs, leaves something to be desired. Indeed, he confessed to a friend who was sitting next to him at a dinner-party that he would have sacrificed all his other writings if only he could have written 'John Peel,' which had just been sung. Although he did not write 'John Peel,' he wrote the words to Tosti's 'Good-bye,' which, at other functions than hunt-dinners, is quite as hackneyed as the favourite old hunting-song.

The two chapters that are chosen as specimens of his work are both admirable monographs, the one on a run with the Pytchley Hounds and the other on a day's horse-

Major Whyte Melville

coping. His account of a run is characteristic of him, in that he always seems to make riding to Hounds a much more desperate and blood-curdling affair than it really is. He deals in sweat and dirt and tired horses and crashing falls, and gigantic fences, and bottomless brooks.

His '*Riding Recollections*' is an excellent text-book, and wears well. Yet, after reading it, one wonders how one ever got over a fence at all. This is the kind of thing. In his chapter on 'Valour' he tells that a lady 'who had not quite succeeded in clearing a high post-and-rail with a boggy ditch on the landing side was down and under the horse. The animal's whole weight rested on her legs, so as to keep her in such a position that her head lay between its fore and hind feet, where the least attempt at a struggle, hemmed in by those four shining shoes, must have dashed her brains out.' It is true that he is paying a chivalrous tribute to the lady's courage in this very trying position, but the mere description of the thing is enough to prevent one ever riding at a post-and-rail again. All the same, '*Riding Recollections*,' as well as his other works, is full of good things. And the charm of the author is that he must have loved the horses and the Hounds and the men and the women who followed them very dearly to have been able to write of them as he did. He is always so gentle ; always the 'sahib.' He speaks of the Chase and all that belongs to it with the respect and the affection that entitles him to a place among the authors who have addressed themselves to the Sport of our Ancestors.

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The chapter selected from '*Holmby House*' is thought by some people to be a classic in the literature of the Chase, and is often mentioned when the question is asked, ' Which is the best imaginary description of a run ? ' We should ourselves certainly give the blue ribbon to Beckford, whose account will be dealt with presently. But the reader can now set them side by side, and choose for himself.

'*Market Harborough*' can be read again with greater pleasure than any of Major Whyte Melville's works. It wears remarkably well. The central figure is Mr. Sawyer, who, having been rusticated from Oxford, settled down on his estate in some provincial country with enough money to keep a few hunters and to buy another to take down to the Shires on his celebrated visit to Market Harborough. Mr. Sawyer thought and talked of nothing but hunting. In the summer he went to Tattersalls every Sunday afternoon. He was typical of that country gentleman who in those days never did a stroke of work, was animated by no sort of public spirit, read nothing but '*Bell's Life*,' '*The Field*,' and the '*Sporting Magazine*,' and was apparently expected by the rest of the world to do nothing but amuse himself. He had been living up to this standard of conduct by hunting from home, but it occurred to him that he might get more amusement out of life by going to Market Harborough. So Major Whyte Melville describes how he walked over to find out if Mr. Job Sloper, the local horse-dealer, had a horse for sale that would carry him over Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, and how he bought

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the roan horse. The thing could not be better done. The author brings out the whole humour of horse-dealing without missing a single point. The flattery ; the wonder how such a nice horse came to be in the Sloper establishment unless he had some serious 'crab' ; the trial ; the luncheon ; the deal ; the second look at the horse by the new owner ; then the misgiving at finding him smaller than he thought when he got him home next day, are all set down by the hand of a master.

There is indeed nothing more delightful than going to look for the horse you want and being quite sure that you have found him from the very first moment you are introduced to him in the box. In choosing a horse there is no truer guide than love at first sight ; though, if we may criticise Mr. Sawyer, it is wise to ask the price of the horse before you get on his back. Some people can no more conceal their admiration for a horse than they can conceal their admiration for a lady. If he is as good a ride as your instinct tells you he is, you may return so flushed with the pride of what you think is masterly equestrianism that the dealer, if he is half sharp, and some of them are even more than half sharp, will put £50 on to his price unless you have asked it beforehand. But perhaps Mr. Sawyer could command his own face.

Those who read this chapter may think it worth while to read the whole book again. If they do, they will surely be rewarded. There is an incident in it which has some bearing on the ethics of selling horses to one's friends that

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is worthy of attention. Mr. Sawyer had been stuck by some one with a flat-catching brute whom he called Marathon—underbred, slow, sulky, and a dangerous, slovenly fencer. Mr. Sawyer first of all allowed his friend the Honble. Crasher, who had been kind to him, and who was a gentleman to his finger-tips, to believe that Marathon had actually beaten the Honble. Crasher's crack mare Chance in a trial, when he knew that his rascal of a groom had really won the trial on the galloping hack Jack-a-Dandy, concealing the fraud by means of the early morning darkness and a rug. Mr. Sawyer then rode the real Marathon out hunting, and was rather avoiding the Hounds, not wishing to expose the worthless animal, when they crossed his front, and he nicked in and contrived by great good luck to force the vulgar brute through a bullfinch and cut down Mr. Crasher himself and some more of the first flight. The Honble. Crasher, with the news of the false trial in his mind, offered Mr. Sawyer £250 for Marathon then and there. Ought Mr. Sawyer to have accepted the offer, knowing that it was based upon the fraud perpetrated by his groom quite as much as on the accident that manœuvred Marathon through the bullfinch? Anyway he did accept it, and the Honble. Crasher thought Mr. Sawyer what is now called quite 'a card' for having done so. In fact, he actually complimented Mr. Sawyer on the transaction, though indeed he never knew about the trial. That is the ugly part of it. The explanation of Crasher's attitude is to be found in his unfailing good nature, and his

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desire to save himself trouble and to have no unpleasantness. But Mr. Sawyer was punished all the same. Did the Honble. Crasher invent the punishment? Anyhow, he persuaded Mr. Sawyer to sit behind Marathon, who had never been in harness before, and a chestnut horse who was a bad starter, in a phaeton to go out to dinner with Parson Dove. Crasher was a most casual coachman with no nerves, and contrived, either by accident or design, to give his friend a really bad time, and on the way home drove clean through a shut gate and smashed the whole turn-out to pieces.

The affair of Marathon is interesting because it opens up the whole question of the ethics of horse-dealing. Did our ancestors deliberately 'do' their friends in this shameless manner? Of course literature is not sworn testimony. But it is difficult to believe that Major Whyte Melville would himself have suppressed the trial. Mr. Sawyer was supposed to know how to 'play the game,' and yet he was undoubtedly guilty of what we should call sharp practice. To-day the buyer is almost too well protected. If he buys a horse at auction described as a 'good hunter,' he can send the animal back unless he can do pretty nearly everything except talk. If he buys from a dealer he can try the horse over made fences, or over the natural country, or in many cases get a day's hunting on him for nothing, and then send any vet. he likes to examine him. Perhaps real rascality is reserved, as in '*Market Harborough*,' for private dealings between friends. Maybe those people are right who will buy a horse from any one except a close friend.

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Major Whyte Melville's heroes and heroines were usually like himself, without fear and without reproach. There runs through all his books a certain spirit of chivalry and affection, as it appeared to him to exist, and did exist, in spite of Dundreary whiskers and crinolines. It is certain that the possession of these qualities, together with a delightful sense of humour, caused him to be well and truly loved by many friends who were shocked at his death from a fall on the flat when out hunting near Tetbury. It was on this occasion that the late Lord Rosslyn wrote the sonnet which follows. The news that a dear friend had broken his neck out hunting would no doubt be a shock. But the age in which we now live has become more familiar with sudden death, and would not be 'appalled' or 'petrified with pain' in the presence of a swift and merciful end. For all that, Lord Rosslyn, himself a gifted writer and an outstanding figure in the world of sport and fashion, must be allowed the licence of the poets. This is what he wrote :—

IN MEMORIAM

The engineer by his own petard slain,
The eagle pierced by shaft from his own wing,
Are plaintive fancies, such as poets sing,
And touch the heart but coldly through the brain ;
But thou, dear George, in thine own sport thus ta'en,
In all the prime of manhood, and the swing
Of gallant gallop, struck stone-dead—the thing
Appals, and petrifies the mind with pain.

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Bright, brave, and tender, Poesy's pet child,
Romance and History's lore alike were thine ;
Thy wit ne'er wounded, yet the contest won,
For at thy jests the gravest dullard smiled ;
Last scion of an ancient Scottish line,
Whose 'old folks' live to mourn their only son !

Dec. 6, 1878.

'YOUR HAND-WRITING, SIR'

'Mornin', sir,' says Mr. Sloper, scenting a customer as he accosts his guest. 'Oh, it's you, is it, Mr. Sawyer? Won't ye step in and set down after your walk? Take a glass of mild ale and a crust of bread and cheese, or a drop of sherry or anythink?'

'No hunting to-day, Job,' answers the visitor, declining the refreshment; 'so I just toddled over to see how you're getting on, and have a look round the stables; no harm in looking, you know.'

Mr. Sloper's face assumes an expression of profound mystery. 'I'm glad you come over to-day, sir,' he says, in a tone of confidential frankness, 'of all days in the year. I've a 'orse here, as I should like to ast your opinion about —a gent like *you*¹ as knows what a 'unter really is. And so you should, Mr. Sawyer, for there's no man alive takes greater liberties with 'em when they *can* go and do it. And

¹ Words in italics are in italics in original.

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I 've got one in that box, as I think, just *is* more than curious.'

'Would he carry me?' asks Mr. Sawyer, with well-affected indifference, as if he had not come over expressly to find one that would. 'Not that I want a horse, you know; but if I saw one I liked very much, and you didn't price him too high, why *I might* be induced to buy against next season, perhaps.'

Job took his hands out of his coat-pockets, and spread them abroad, as it were to dry. The action denoted extreme purity and candour.

'No; I don't think as he ought to carry *you*, sir,' was the unexpected reply. 'Now, I ain't a-going to tell you a lie, Mr. Sawyer. This horse didn't *ought* to be ridden, not the way you take and ride him, Mr. Sawyer; leastways not over such a blind heart-breaking country as this here. He 's too good, he is, for that kind of work; he ought to be in Leicestershire, *he ought*; the Harborough country, that 's the country for him. He 's too fast for us, and that 's the truth. Only, to be sure, we have a vast of plough here-about, and I never see such a sticker through dirt. It makes no odds to him, pasture or plough, and the sweetest hack ever I clapped eyes on besides. However, you shall judge for yourself, Mr. Sawyer. I won't ask you to believe *me*. You 've a quicker eye to a horse than I have, by a long chalk, and I 'd sooner have your opinion than my own. I *would* now, and that 's the truth!'

Our purchaser began to think he might possibly have

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hit upon the animal at last. Often as he had been at the game, and often as he had been disappointed, he was still sanguine enough to believe he might draw the prize-ticket in the lottery at any time. As I imagine every man who pulls on his boots to go out hunting has a sort of vague hope that to-day may be his day of triumph with the hounds, so the oldest and wariest of us cannot go into a dealer's yard without a sort of half-conscious idea that there *must* be a trump card somewhere in the pack, and it *may* be our luck to hold it as well as another's.

But Sloper, like the rest of his trade, was not going to show his game first. It seems to be a maxim with all salesmen to prove their customers with inferior articles before they come to the real thing. Mr. Sawyer had to walk through a four-stall stable, and inspect, preparatory to declining, a mealy bay cob, a lame grey, a broken-winded chestnut, and an enormous brown animal, very tall, very narrow, very ugly, with extremely upright forelegs and shoulders to match. The latter his owner affirmed to be '*an extraordinary shaped un*,' as no doubt he was. A little playful *bardinage* on the merits of this last enlivened the visit.

'What will you take for the brown, Sloper, if I buy him at so much the foot?' said the customer, as they emerged into the fresh air.

'Say ten pound a foot, sir!' answered Job, with the utmost gravity, 'and ten over, because *he always has a foot to spare*. Come now, Mr. Sawyer, I can afford to let a good

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customer like you have that horse for *fefty*. *Fefty* guineas, or even *pounds*, sir, to *you*. I got him in a bad debt, you see, sir ;—it 's Bible truth I 'm telling ye ;—and he only stood *me* in forty-seven pounds ten, *and* a sov. I gave the man as brought him over. He 's not everybody's horse, Mr. Sawyer, that isn't ; but I think he 'll carry *you* remarkably well.'

' I don't think I 'll ever give him a chance,' was the rejoinder. ' Come, Job, we 're burning daylight ; let 's go and have a look at the crack.'

One individual had been listening to the above conversation with thrilling interest. This was no less a personage than Barney, Mr. Sloper's head groom, general factotum, and rough-rider in ordinary—an official whose business it was to ride anything at anything, for anybody who asked him. He was a little old man, with one eye, a red handkerchief, and the general appearance of a post-boy on half-pay ; a sober fellow, too, and as brave as King Richard ; yet had he expressed himself strongly about this said brown horse, the previous evening, to the maid-of-all-work. ' He 's the wussest we 've had yet,' was his fiat. ' It 's nateral for 'em to fall ; but when *he* falls, he 's all over a chap till he 's crumpled him.' So his heroic heart beat more freely when they adjourned to the neighbouring box.

Mr. Sloper threw the door open with an air. It must be confessed he seldom had one that would bear, without preparation, a minute inspection from the eye of a sportsman ; but he knew *this* was a sound one, and made the most



"HAS HE GOT A COUGH, THE OLD ONE?"



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of it. Clothed and hooded, littered to the hocks, and sheeted to the tail, there was yet something about his general appearance that fascinated Mr. Sawyer at once. Job saw the spell was working, and abstained from disturbing it. As far as could be seen, the animal was a long, low, well-bred-looking roan, with short flat legs, large clean hocks, and swelling muscular thighs. His supple skin threw off a bloom, as if he was in first-rate condition ; and when, laying his ears back and biting the manger, he lifted a fore-leg, as it were, to expostulate with his visitors, the hoof was round, open, and well-developed, as blue, and to all appearance as hard, as a flint.

‘ Has he *fashion* enough, think ye, sir ? ’ asked Job, at length, breaking the silence. ‘ Strip him, Barney,’ he added, taking the straw from his mouth.

The roan winced, and stamped, and whisked his tail, and set his back up during the process ; but when it was concluded, Mr. Sawyer could not but confess to himself, that if he was only as good as he *looked*, he would *do*.

‘ Feel his legs, Mr. Sawyer ! ’ observed the dealer, turning away to conceal the triumph that *would* ooze out. ‘ There ’s some legs—there ’s some hocks and thighs ! Talk of loins, and look where his tail ’s set on. I never saw such manners in the hunting-field. Six-year-old—not a speck or blemish ; bold as a bull, and gentle as a lady ; he can go as fast as you can clap your hands, and stay till the middle of the week after next—jump a town, too, and never turn his head from the place you put him at. As handy as a

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fiddle, as neat as a pink, and worth all the money to carry in your eye when you go out to buy hunters. But what's the use of talking about it to a judge like you? Lay your leg over him—only just lay your leg over him, Mr. Sawyer. I don't want you to buy him! but get on him and feel his action, just as a favour to *me*.'

Our friend had made up his mind he would do so from the first. There was no mistaking the appearance of the animal; so good was it, that he had but two misgivings—some rank unsoundness, to account for its being there, or so high a price as to be beyond his means; for Mr. Sawyer was too fond of the sport to give a sum that he could not replace for so perishable an article as a hunter.

He was no mean equestrian, our friend, and quite at home on a strange horse. As he drew the curb-rein gently through his fingers, the roan dropped his long, lean head, and champed the bit playfully, tossing a speck of froth back on his rider's boots.

' You 've got a mouth, at any rate,' quoth Mr. Sawyer, and trotted him gently down the hard road, the animal stepping freely and gaily under him, full of life and spirits. The customer liked his mount, and couldn't help showing it. ' May I lark him? ' said he, pulling up after a short canter to and fro on the turf by the wayside, during which Job Sloper had been exercising his mental arithmetic in what we may term a sum of problematical addition.

' Take him into the close, sir,' was the generous reply;

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‘ put him at anything you like. If you can get him into one of these fences, I ’ll give him to you ! ’

So Mr. Sawyer sat down to jump a low hedge and ditch, then stood up, and caught hold of the roan’s head, and sent him a cracker through the adjoining plough, and across a larger fence into a pasture, and back again over a fair flight of rails, and lost his flat shooting-hat, and rucked his plaid trousers up to his knees ; and Sloper marked his kindling eye and glowing cheek, and knew that he had *landed* him.

‘ Walk him about for ten minutes before you do him over,’ said that worthy to Barney, as Mr. Sawyer dismounted and the latter brought him his hat. ‘ And now, sir,’ added the hospitable dealer, ‘ you can’t go away without tasting my cheese—the same you liked last time, you know. Walk in, sir ; this way, and mind the step, if *you* please.’ So speaking, Mr. Sloper ushered his guest into a neat little parlour with a strong odour of preserved tobacco-smoke, where a clean cloth set off a nice luncheon of bread and cheese, flanked by a foaming jug of strong ale and a decanter of oily-brown sherry.

And herein the dealer showed his knowledge of human nature, and his discrimination in the different characteristics of the species. Had his guest been some generous scion of the aristocracy, with more money than nerves, he would have *primed* him first, and put him up to ride afterwards. But he knew his man. He was well aware that Mr. Sawyer required no stimulant to make him jump, but

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a strong one to induce him to part with his money ; so he proposed the luncheon after he was satisfied that his customer was pleased with his mount.

Neither of them touched on business during the meal, the conversation consisting chiefly of the runs that had lately taken place in the Old Country, with many an inferred compliment to the good riding of the possible purchaser. Then Mr. Sawyer produced the Laranagas and offered one to Job, who bit it, and wet it, and smoked it, as men do who are more used to clay pipes, and then they went back to the stable to see the roan done up.

The gallop and the ale were working in Mr. Sawyer's brain, but he didn't see his way into the roan at a hundred ; so he obstinately held his tongue. The dealer was obliged to break the ice.

' I 'd take it very friendly of you, sir, if you 'd give me your honest opinion of that horse,' said he, waving the Laranaga towards the animal. ' I fancy he 's too good for our country ; and I 've a brother-in-law down in Rutland as wants to have him very bad. He 's just the cut, so he says, for these Melton gents ; and he 's a good judge, is my brother-in-law, and a pretty rider to boot. He 'd give me any price too ; but then, you know, sir, askin' your pardon, it isn't always ready money between relations ; and that cuts the other way again, as a man may say. What do you think, Mr. Sawyer ? '

' I 'll find out what he wants for him, at any rate,' thought the customer. ' What 's his figure ? ' was the abrupt rejoinder.

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Mr. Sloper hesitated. ‘A hundred and——’ *eighty*, he was going to say ; but seeing his customer’s eye resting on the roan’s back ribs—a point in which the horse was somewhat deficient—he dropped at once to seventy, and regretted it the next moment when he caught the expression of the listener’s face.

‘It isn’t *even* money,’ answered Mr. Sawyer, without, however, making the same sort of face he had done several times before, when he had refused to give double the sum at which he had eventually purchased. ‘I should say you might get a hundred and twenty for him down there, if you ’d luck. But it ’s a great risk—a great risk—and a long distance ; and perhaps have him sent back to you in the spring. If I wanted a horse, I ’d give you a hundred for him, though he isn’t exactly my sort. A hundred !—I ’ll tell you what, Sloper, I ’ll be hanged if I won’t *chance* it. I ’ll *give* you a hundred—guineas—come ! Money down and no questions asked.’

‘I can’t warrant him sound,’ answered Mr. Sloper ; ‘and I ’d rather *you* had him than anybody. But it ’s childish talking of a hundred guineas and that horse on the same afternoon. However, I thank you kindly all the same, Mr. Sawyer. Barney ! shut the box up. Come in, sir, and have one glass of sherry before you start. The evenings get chill at this time of year, and that ’s old sherry, and won’t hurt you no more than milk. He *is* a nice horse, Mr. Sawyer, I think—a *very* nice horse, and I ’m glad you ’re pleased with him.’

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So they returned into the little parlour, and stirred up the fire, and finished the bottle of old sherry ; nor is it necessary to remark that with the concluding glass of that generous fluid the roan became the property of John Standish Sawyer, under the following somewhat complicated agreement :—That he was to give an immediate cheque for a hundred and forty pounds, and ten pounds at the end of the season ; which latter donation was to be increased to twenty if he should sell him for anything over two hundred—a contingency which the dealer was pleased to observe amounted to what he called ‘a moral.’

The new owner went to look at him once more in the stable, and thought him the nicest horse he ever saw in his life. The walk home, too, was delightful, till the sherry had evaporated, when it became rather tedious ; and at dinner-time Mr. Sawyer was naturally less hungry than thirsty. All the evening, however, he congratulated himself on having done a good day’s work. All night, too, he dreamed of the roan ; and on waking resolved to call him ‘Hotspur.’

When the horse came home next day he certainly looked rather smaller than his new owner had fancied. Old Isaac, too, growled out his untoward opinion that he ‘looked a sort as would work very *light*.’ But then Isaac always grumbled—it was the old groom’s way of enjoying himself.



"TALLY-HOO!" SHOUTS OUR FRIEND JACK.

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EXTRACT FROM 'HOLMBY HOUSE'

We can fancy ourselves astride of a good horse by the side of Jack Woodcock as he views the fox away from the lower corner of the gorse. What a long, wiry, tough-looking animal it is, with a white tag to that handsome brush, which, as he steals across the neighbouring pasture, he whisks in derision, as much as to say, ' Gallop away, my fine fellows ! according to your wont ; hurry and bustle, and jump and splutter ! The harder you ride the better for me ! '

' Tally-ho ! ' shouts our friend Jack, erect in his stirrups. ' Twang ' goes Charles Payne's horn from the middle of the gorse. Already the owner of the covert is coming best pace round the corner. Trust him not to lose his start, and to make good use of it when he has got it. In twos and threes the hounds are pouring through the boundary fence ; ten or twelve couple are settling to the scent ; the rest, with ears erect, are flying to the cry. Now they stoop together with collective energy, and drive along over the grass in all the mute ecstasy of pace. A burst such as this is pastime for the gods !

It sobers our imaginary steed, our pen-and-ink Pegasus ; he drops quietly to his bridle, and a turn in our favour enables us to pull him into a trot, and to look about us. Seven or eight men are in the same field with the hounds ; half a dozen stiff fences and a couple of miles of grass have shaken off the larger portion of the field, but they are even now coming through a bridle-gate not far distant in the rear,

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and should a check unfortunately occur at this critical moment, they will be up in plenty of time to do lots of mischief still. But no ; the pack is streaming on. ‘ Forward,’ says Charles Payne, cramming his horn into its case, and gathering his horse for an ‘ oxer.’ ‘ Forward,’ adds Mr. Cust, cracking the far-rail, as he swings over the obstacle in his stride. ‘ Line ! ’ shouts a Meltonian at an unfortunate aspirant, whose horse is swerving to the thickest place in the fence. ‘ Serve him right,’ remarks the Meltonian to himself, landing safely in the next field, while the aspirant rolls headlong to the earth. Jack Woodcock, with an amused smile, slips quietly by to the front. Three or four other men, one in a black coat, enter the field at different points ; that quiet gentleman *over*, not *through* the gate. A loose horse with streaming reins gallops wildly after the chase ; and the hounds, with a burning scent, are pointing straight for Naseby Field.

And now every man hugs his trusty hunter by the head, and spares his energies as much as possible ere he encounters the yielding soil of that classic ground. Many a tired horse has Naseby Field to answer for, from the thundering battle-steeds of the Cavaliers, led by hot Prince Rupert, to the panting thoroughbreds of Jersey and Alix, and Cooke and Knightley, and the heroes of fifty years ago, who urged the mimic war over that eventful plain. Ay, down to our times when, although the plough has passed over its marshy surface, and draining and high-farming have given secure foothold to man and beast, many a sobbing steed and de-



"COME UP, HORSE!" MULLER'S CHARLES IN REPEA.



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jected rider can still bear witness to the exhaustive properties of that black adhesive soil, many a dirty coat and stationary hunter rues the noble impulse that would follow the fleeting pack over such a country as this after a three-days' rain.

Some of them begin to hope he may have entered the thick holding covert of Naseby Thorns, and that the conclusion of so rapid a burst may save their own and their horses' credit. But a countryman on the opposite hill is holloaing as if his throat must crack. Our fox is forward still ; he has not a notion of entering the covert, warmed as he is by the merry pace of the last mile or so.

'No occasion to lift them, Charles,' observes Mr. Villiers, as he lends an ear to the far-off countryman, and points to the streaming pack wheeling with every turn of the scent, like pigeons on the wing.

'Couldn't get near enough if there was. Come up, horse !' mutters Charles in reply, as he bores through a black close-cut hedge, sinking up to the hocks on the taking off side. There is no chance of a check now ; and as the professed Jester of the Hunt remarks, 'If he don't stop at Tally-ho, he may go on to Texas !'

The field, that enterprising body whose self-dependence is so touchingly illustrated at every sign-post, are already somewhat hopelessly behindhand and considerably puzzled by the coincidence of two safe practicable lanes, leading equally in the direction of the line of chase. It

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divides accordingly into two hurrying columns, neither of which will in all probability see a hound again to-day.

So 'on we go again,' leaving Tally-ho Gorse to the left, and up the hill for Hazelbeech, threading the fine old trees that tower upon its heights, and pointing ever onwards for the wide grassy vale of Cottesbrooke, spread out like a panorama before us, shut in by wooded hills, dotted with fine old standard trees, and smiling beauteous and peaceful in the chequered light of a February sun.

Thank Heaven ! a check at last. Pegasus was beginning to want it sadly. He struck that top-rail uncommonly hard, and has dropped his hind-legs in the last two consecutive ditches. There are still some half-dozen men with the hounds, but their horses look as if they had had nearly enough, and we are inclined to believe one or two of the riders are beginning to wish it was over. The country for miles back is dotted with equestrians of every rank and every hue. A child on a pony has turned, not *headed*, the fox. Charles Payne opines he cannot have entered the gorse with so 'warm a jacket,' as he phrases it; so he holds his hounds towards the plantations on his right. Fairplay whisks her stern about her sides, and drops a note or two to her comrades as they gather to the line.

'Ye-geote, old lady !' says Charles, in the inexplicable language of a huntsman.

'She 's always right, that old bitch,' remarks Mr. Villiers, who has just turned Olympian's head for an instant to the wind.

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‘Twang’ goes the horn once more, and away score the hounds through ‘Pursar’s Hills,’ as if they were fresh out of the kennel, and over the wide grassy pastures below, and up the opposite rise, with untiring energy, leaving the foremost horseman toiling a field and a half behind them, till a pause and momentary hover in the Welford Road enables Pegasus and his comrades to reach them once more.

It is labour and sorrow now, yet is it a sweet and joyous pain. Still, we can hardly call that enjoyment which we wish was over ; and most devoutly now do we all hope that we may soon kill this gallant fox, before he kills our gallant horses. The best blood of Newmarket is but mortal, after all ; and Pegasus is by this time going most unreservedly on his own shoulders and his rider’s hands.

Down the hill between Creaton and Holywell we make a tolerable fight ; but though Olympian clears the brook at the bottom, the rest of us flounder through. We have no false pride now, and do not any of us turn up our noses at gates or gaps, or other friendly egress. Everything is comparative. A country doctor on his fresh hack, meeting us at this period, opines we are going quite slow, but we know better ; so does Pegasus, so does old Fairplay, so does the fox.

He is not travelling so straight now. Up and down yonder hedgerow the pack turn like harriers, and we think we must be very near him. But see ! the crows

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are stooping yonder over a low black object in the distance. 'Tis the hunted fox, pointing straight for the coverts of Althorpe. He will never reach them, for the hounds are now close upon his track, and they run into him in the large grass field by Holmby House under the old oak tree.

CHAPTER V

MR. BROMLEY-DAVENPORT

MR. WILLIAM BROMLEY-DAVENPORT of Capes-thorne in the county of Cheshire was born in 1821, was educated at Eton and Christ Church, and was a Tory, a Member of Parliament, a Colonel of Yeomanry, an accomplished sportsman, and a witty writer and speaker. There was no branch of field sports in which he was not thoroughly proficient, and he could write about them like few other people. Just before he died in 1884 he wrote the last lines of a volume entitled '*Sport*,' illustrated by General Hope-Crealocke, which is doubtless familiar to many who read these pages. It contains four papers: upon Fox-hunting, salmon-fishing, deer-stalking, and covert-shooting respectively; each one of them a charming little descriptive essay on its own subject, with much good advice which every young sportsman will do well to read and follow.

Mr. Bromley-Davenport was, however, something more than a sporting writer. He not only thoroughly understood the values of field sports, but he also had a shrewd appreciation of the signs and portents of the age in which he lived. What Disraeli called 'the miserable philosophy of the day which ascribes everything to "the spirit of the age"'

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caused him much uneasiness. He had no use for the schemer and the doctrinaire. He saw that some of these gentlemen were taking themselves too seriously, and feared 'lest in grasping after the shadow of national perfection we only attain the reality of a saturnalia of prigs — an apotheosis of claptrap.' What would he have had to say about the League of Nations ? This point of view of life is expressed in the pages of '*Sport*,' particularly in the paper on Fox-hunting. This paper is indeed a kind of prose epilogue to '*The Dream of the Old Meltonian*' and to '*Lowesby Hall*.' Fox-hunting, he says, is the national sport, because it is a manifestation of 'the manly predilection inherent in our Anglo-Saxon nature for a sport into which the element of danger conspicuously enters,' and because 'all classes enjoy it.' To the accomplished rider to Hounds it is an anodyne for all kinds of trouble. 'There is a burning scent, a good fox, a good country ; he is on a good horse, and has got a good start ; then for the next twenty or thirty minutes (Elysium on earth can scarcely ever last longer) he absorbs as much happiness into his mental and physical organisation as human nature is capable of containing at one time . . . that very morning, perchance, he was full of care, worried by letters from lawyers and stewards, announcements of farms thrown upon his hands ; and, if an M.P., of a certain contest at the coming election. Where are all these now ? Ask of the winds ! They are vanished. His whole system is steeped in delight ; there is not space in it for the absorption of another sensation. Talk of

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opium ? Of hashish ? They cannot supply such a voluptuous entrancement as a run like this.'

A run like this is almost the same run, with names of places left out, that he describes in 'The Dream of the Old Meltonian.' It is not too much to say that this is the best imaginary run which the Fox-hunting verse of the last century has given to us. Had it been set to music and to an air that would have tickled the ear, it might well have been the most popular hunting-song of the day. Read it aloud, and you will find that the lilt of the metre is like the gallop of a horse. A sporting recitation at a convivial gathering is apt to be dangerous, and conjures up in the memory such masterpieces as 'Kissing Cup's Race.' But we have heard Mr. Bromley-Davenport's stanzas roll trippingly off the tongue and hold spell-bound the attention of such a critical audience as a Bullingdon dinner-party, who would surely have pelted with bread, or whatever came handy, any one who tried to charm them with 'Kissing Cup's Race.'

'Lowesby Hall' was pronounced by Major Whyte Melville to be the best parody in the English language. If parodies are to be allowed at all, this must surely be one of them. It is free from offence, and does not detract from the dignity of the original. It is not mere parody for the sake of parody ; rather does Mr. Bromley-Davenport make use of Lord Tennyson's vehicle for the sake of telling his own story and uttering his own prophecy, and in the doing of it occasionally yields to the temptation to

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sharpen his brains on his model, and indulges for the moment in sheer irreverent parody. 'Lowesby Hall' sparkles with wit, is studded with epigram, and contains some remarkable prophecies. Lord Tennyson's own prophecy about airships is startling :—

' For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be ;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales ;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue.'

Now look at Mr. Bromley-Davenport's picture of the condition of England when the Whigs and the prigs whom he hated so cordially had completed their handiwork ; and see that as a prophet he is not far behind his model, even though Fox-hunting is not yet abolished by an Order in Council. Such objection to field sports, particularly to Fox-hunting, as there may have been was probably political in part and in part humanitarian. To-day it has no platform. In truth, it never had a very strong one. No humanitarian who is squeamish about field sports can expect a hearing until he has set forth his views on the condition of such countries as Russia and Ireland. There may have been at one time a sort of abstract political animosity to the whole idea of the Chase on the part of the heresy hunter with a mind tinctured by class feeling. Fox-hunting might appear to such a one to be a rudiment of a haughty and

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rapacious feudalism. But although red coats, and hunting-horns, and liveried servants, and meets of the Foxhounds within the drawbridge of the ducal castle or the courtyard of the baronial hall give some colour to this picture, the Sport of our Ancestors is in fact and in practice entirely national. If it were based upon exclusiveness it would have deservedly perished long ago. Those who are responsible for the management of Fox-hunting cannot do better than bear in mind this great truth. A substantial subscription is necessary nowadays to pay the M.F.H. a sufficient salary to enable him to carry on. But a high tariff, difficult as it is to avoid, carries with it the seed of danger if it be too rigidly enforced. And the danger is that Fox-hunting may tend to become the exclusive pleasure of the well-to-do. Now there is one class of man whom on every count it is most undesirable to exclude from the hunting-field. And that is the professional or business man from the country town, be he solicitor, wine-merchant, doctor, or even parson. All these men in the exercise of their various callings see among their clients many sorts and conditions of men and women, and, if they are Fox-hunters, carry with them on their daily round the atmosphere of the sport into sundry and divers places, and indirectly contribute enormously to its popularity. Some of them may even hunt only once a fortnight, or perhaps less, but it will be a bad day for Fox-hunting if ever they and their kind have to give it up altogether under pressure from the tax-gatherer of the hunt. There is no exclusiveness

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so odious or so vulgar as the exclusiveness which is avowedly based upon nothing except a cash consideration. The practice of capping may possibly be defended on grounds of convenience or utility. But the spectacle of gentlemen dropping half-crowns into a hat looks more like the preliminaries to a sweepstake on board a liner than the beginning of a day's hunting. The thing is sordid and out of the picture, besides being a great nuisance. Part of the delight of Fox-hunting is to steep the senses in forgetfulness of everything to do with finance. Nobody understood all this better than Mr. Bromley-Davenport. He was never tired of pointing out the equality between all the classes that exists in the hunting-field, and has rightly diagnosed this equality as being the principal guarantee for the continuance of the Sport of our Ancestors. But once the Fox had broken covert, and the Hounds had settled to him, he himself had very few if any equals in the knack of going the shortest way. The rest of the field he speaks of as 'the blundering mass' from whom in his dream he extricates himself by jumping in and out of the turnpike road ; and although no class privilege hindered any one from being first over the fences, his own dash and dexterity secured to the author the position of leader. He is not ashamed to exult in his pride of place, and to admit the satisfaction of cutting down all his friends save the three who got over the Whissendine without a fall. Equality is now at a discount : it disappears, as always, in the presence of individual character and skill.

Mr. Bromley-Davenport

There is no humbug about 'The Dream of the Old Meltonian.' It connotes the attitude of the country gentlemen to the House of Commons when it was 'the best club in London.' There was, no doubt, a hereditary obligation to represent the county in Parliament, but of course the whole thing was a bore, and every one who knew what was good was naturally thinking about Fox-hunting. So the prosiness of the Member for Boreham sends the Fox-hunter to sleep, and his dream brings him the ecstasy of the hunting-field, which he sets before us with the pen and the imagination of the artist and the enthusiast.

'Lowesby Hall' is different from 'The Dream of the Old Meltonian.' Into this fine parody, always with the tongue in the cheek, he introduces one after another of his pet aversions—money-lenders, pacifists, Cobdenites, plough countries, and plain women—and chastises them publicly. It is a political satire from the point of view of a Tory. Lord Tennyson seems to have written 'Locksley Hall' in serious vein from the point of view of the International. Not so Mr. Bromley-Davenport. One feels pretty sure that if he and his friends were here to-day they would not have approved of the fusion of either the nations of Europe or the political parties of England. And then he finds the point in Fox-hunting where the ridiculous meets the sublime, and discovers that it is

'Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! I 'm an idiot for my pains ;
Nature made for every sportsman an inferior set of brains.'

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This line has been pronounced by more than one good judge to be the best in the whole field of parody. It is a fine piece of satire with a double edge. It gently rallies that type that consists of nothing but more or less glorified Tony Lumpkins ; but more subtly still does it express what the prig and the intellectual were really thinking about the Fox-hunter, and would have said if they had dared. Here is the original :—

‘ Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! Woman’s pleasure,
woman’s pain,
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower
brain.’

With both pieces open before one, it is difficult not to go on comparing the two. But they must be read through from beginning to end to be appreciated. Perhaps those who think it sacrilege to make fun of the really grand music of the then Poet Laureate had better not make the experiment. On the other hand, it is not impossible to keep the mind in water-tight compartments, and at one moment to revel in the poetry and rhythm of Lord Tennyson and at another to be tickled by the audacity and cleverness of Mr. Bromley-Davenport. What is it that invites parody ? Classic or claptrap ? Claptrap certainly deserves it. But ‘ Locksley Hall ’ is a classic, and ‘ Lowesby Hall ’ is not its only imitation. ‘ The Lay of the Lovelorn ’ in the ‘ *Bon Gaultier Ballads*, ’ written by Sir Theodore Martin and Professor William Aytoun, has some shrewd if rather cheap couplets. But it has not the ease and the breadth

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of 'Lowesby Hall,' which we have included in this collection of sporting literature because it is worth preserving, and because an acquaintance with it will add greatly to the humours of the hunting-field. A young lady once went out hunting by train, and looked forward to returning in the same conveyance. But it was not to be. A long point made it necessary to ride home some sixteen or seventeen miles ; the saddle did not get any softer, but some of the long weary miles were made to seem short and less tiring by the fact that her companion was able to recite to her 'The Dream of an Old Meltonian' and 'Lowesby Hall.'

THE DREAM OF AN OLD MELTONIAN

I am old, I am old, and my eyes are grown weaker,
My beard is as white as the foam on the sea,
Yet pass me the bottle, and fill me a beaker,
A bright brimming toast in a bumper for me.
Back, back through long vistas of years I am wafted,
But the glow at my heart 's undiminished in force,
Deep, deep in that heart has fond memory engrafted
Those quick thirty minutes from Ranksboro' Gorse.

What is time ? the effluxion of life Zoophitic
In dreary pursuit of position or gain.
What is life ? The absorption of vapours mephitic,
And the bursting of sunlight on senses and brain !

The Sport of Our Ancestors

Such a life have I lived—though so speedily over,
Condensing the joys of a century's course,
From the find till we eat him near Woodwellhead Cover,
In thirty bright minutes from Ranksboro' Gorse.

Last night in St. Stephen's so wearily sitting
(The member for Boreham sustained the debate),
Some pitying spirit that round me was flitting
Vouchsafed a sweet vision my pains to abate.
The Mace, and the Speaker, and House disappearing,
The leather-clad bench is a thorough-bred horse ;
"Tis the whimpering cry of the foxhound I 'm hearing,
And my ' seat ' is a pig-skin at Ranksboro' Gorse.

He 's away ! I can hear the identical holloa !
I can feel my young thorough-bred strain down the ride,
I can hear the dull thunder of hundreds that follow,
I can see my old comrades in life by my side.
Do I dream ? all around me I see the dead riding,
And voices long silent re-echo with glee ;
I can hear the far wail of the Master's vain chiding,
As vain as the Norseman's reproof to the sea.

Vain indeed ! for the bitches are racing before us—
Not a nose to the earth—not a stern in the air ;
And we know by the notes of that modified chorus
How straight we must ride if we wish to be there !
With a crash o'er the turnpike, and onward I 'm sailing,
Released from the throes of the blundering mass,
Which dispersed right and left as I topped the high railing,
And shape my own course o'er the billowy grass.



"WELL SAVED! WE ARE OVER!"



Mr. Bromley-Davenport

Select is the circle in which I am moving,
 Yet open and free the admission to all ;
Still, still more select is that company proving,
 Weeded out by the funker and thinned by the fall ;
Yet here all are equal—no class legislation,
 No privilege hinders, no family pride :
In the ‘ image of war ’ show the pluck of the nation ;
 Ride, ancient patrician ! democracy, ride !

Oh ! gently, my young one ; the fence we are nearing
 Is leaning towards us—’tis hairy and black,
The binders are strong, and necessitate clearing,
 Or the wide ditch beyond will find room for your back.
Well saved ! We are over ! now far down the pastures
 Of Ashwell the willows betoken the line
Of the dull-flowing stream of historic disasters ;
 We must face, my bold young one, the dread Whissendine !

No shallow-dug pan with a hurdle to screen it,
 That cock-tail imposture the steeple chase brook ;
But the steep broken banks tell us plain, if we mean it,
 The less we shall like it the longer we look.
Then steady, my young one, my place I ’ve selected,
 Above the dwarf willow ’tis sound I ’ll be bail,
With your muscular quarters beneath you collected,
 Prepare for a rush like the ‘ limited mail.’

Oh ! now let me know the full worth of your breeding,
 Brave son of Belzoni, be true to your sires,
Sustain old traditions—remember you ’re leading
 The cream of the cream in the shire of the shires !

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With a quick shortened stride as the distance you measure,
With a crack of the nostril and cock of the ear,
And a rocketing bound, and we 're over, my treasure,
Twice nine feet of water, and landed all clear !

What ! four of us only ? Are these the survivors
Of all that rode gaily from Ranksboro's ridge ?
I hear the faint splash of a few hardy divers,
The rest are in hopeless research of a bridge ;
Vae Victis ! the way of the world and the winners !
Do we ne'er ride away from a friend in distress ?
Alas ! we are anti-Samaritan sinners,
And streaming past Stapleford, onward we press.

Ah ! don't they mean mischief, the merciless ladies ?
What fox can escape such implacable foes ?
Of the sex cruel slaughter for ever the trade is,
Whether human or animal—YONDER he goes !
Never more for the woodland ! his purpose has failed him,
Though to gain the old shelter he gallantly tries ;
In vain the last double, for Jezebel 's nailed him !
Whoohoop ! in the open the veteran dies !

Yes, four of us only ! but is it a vision ?
Dear lost ones, how came ye with mortals to mix ?
Methought that ye hunted the pastures Elysian,
And between us there rolled the unjumpable Styx !
Stay, stay but a moment ! the grass fields are fading,
And heavy obscurity palsies my brain :
Through what country, what ploughs, and what sloughs
am I wading ?
Alas ! 'tis the member for Boreham again !

Mr. Bromley-Davenport

Oh, glory of youth ! consolation of age !
Sublimest of ecstasies under the sun ;
Though the veteran may linger too long on the stage,
Yet he 'll drink a last toast to a fox-hunting run.
And oh ! young descendants of ancient top-sawyers !
By your lives to the world their example enforce ;
Whether landlords, or parsons, or statesmen, or lawyers,
Ride straight as they rode it from Ranksboro' Gorse.

Though a rough-riding world may bespatter your breeches,
Though sorrow may cross you, or slander revile,
Though you plunge overhead in misfortune's blind ditches,
Shun the gap of deception, the hand-gate of guile :
Oh, avoid them ! for there, see the crowd is contending,
Ignoble the object—ill-mannered the throng ;
Shun the miry lane, falsehood, with turns never ending,
Ride straight for truth's timber, no matter how strong.

I 'll pound you safe over ! sit steady and quiet ;
Along the sound headland of honesty steer ;
Beware of false holloas and juvenile riot,
Though the oxer of duty be wide, never fear !
And when the run 's over of earthly existence,
And you get safe to ground, you will fear no remorse,
If you ride it—no matter what line or what distance—
As straight as your fathers from Ranksboro' Gorse.

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LOWESBY HALL

Gilmour, leave me here a little, and when John of Gaunt is drawn,
If you find the raw material, let Jack Morgan blow his horn.

"Tis the place, and all around me, as of old, the magpies call,
Boding evil to the Lord, and flying over Lowesby Hall.

Lowesby Hall that in the distance overlooks the grassy plains,
Swamped from Twyford to the Coplow by the everlasting rains.

Many a day from yonder spinney in November moist and chill
Have I watched the wily animal sneak slowly up the hill.

Many a night I 've watched the vapours of my last remaining weed,
When my spurs have ceased to animate my apathetic steed.

Here in search of sport I 've wandered, nourishing a verdant
youth
With the fairy tales of gallops—ancient runs devoid of truth.

When I dip't into my prospects far as ever I could get,
And felt the wild, delirious joy of getting into debt.

In the spring the pink no longer clothes the sad Meltonian's breast,
In the spring his stumped-up horses are at least allowed a rest.

In the spring too he must settle for the cursèd corn and hay,
In the spring the dire conviction comes upon him—he must pay.

Mr. Bromley-Davenport

Then my tradesmen all about my doors most obstinately clung,
And their eyes on all my movements with a grave observance hung.

So I said, ' My faithful tailor, do a bit of stiff for me,
Trust me yet—my uncle 's shaky—all his coin shall flow to thee.'

On his greasy cheek and forehead came a colour and a light,
As I 've seen the nimble lamplighter turn on the gas at night.

And he said, ' I 'm proud to serve thee, sir, as any gent in town,
If so shaky be thine uncle, thou shalt have the money down.'

Credit seized the glass of time and dribbled out the golden sand,
Every day became more valueless my frequent note of hand.

Health revived my hardy uncle ; now, alas ! he coughed no more,
And the day of his decease appeared more distant than before.

Many a morning have I waited with my hopes upon the rack,
Vainly waited for the footman and a letter sealed with black.

Oh, my tailor ! shallow-hearted ! oh, my tailor, mine no more !
Oh, the dreary, dreary Bond Street ! oh, the Strand's unhappy
shore !

Is it well to use me thus, sir—having known me, to decline
Any further cash advances—with securities like mine ?

But it shall be—thou shalt lower to the level of a dun,
Seeking custom with acrostics like the Moseses and Son.

As the tradesman, so the customer, and thou shalt measure clowns,
They shall pay thee for thy corduroys in ignominious browns.

The Sport of Our Ancestors

I would practise—oh, how gladly ! in the fulness of my hate,
All the slasher's best instructions on thine ugly dial-plate.

What is that which I could turn to ? Can a gentleman descend
To dig the gold which nature intended him to spend ?

Every ship is filled with footmen, and Australia overflows
With the Piccadilly porters and the butlers whom one knows.

I had been content to perish on the sandy Sussex shore
Where Militia men are marshalled to the Minie rifle's roar.

But the gentle voice of Cobden drowns the first invader's drum,
And the Frenchmen do but bluster, and Napoleon funks to come.

Can I but relive in fancy ? Can I view the past again ?
Hide me from my deep emotion—oh, thou wonderful champagne !

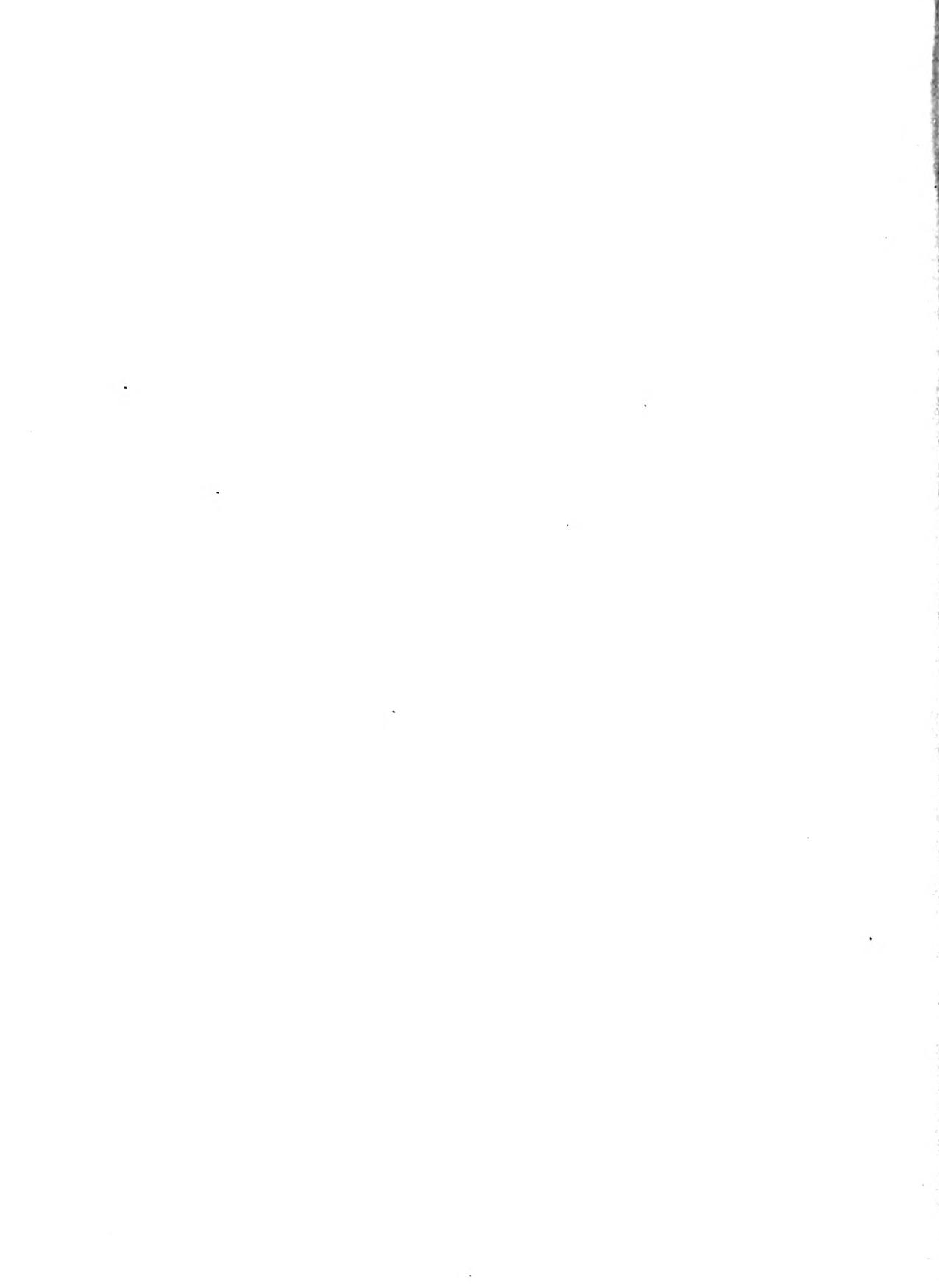
Make me feel the wild pulsation I have often felt before,
When my horse went on before me and my hack was at the
door.

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming sport would
yield,
And rejoicing in the cropper which I got the second field.

And at night along the highway, in the evening dark and chill,
I saw the lights of Melton from the top of Burton Hill.



"ON HIS GREASY CHEEK AND FOREHEAD CAME A COLOUR AND A LIGHT."



Mr. Bromley-Davenport

Then my spirit rushed before me, and I felt the 'thirty-four'
Percolating through my system. Noble vintage ! Now no
more.

Brother thrusters ! Brother funkers ! You may well look rather
blue,
For the future that 's impending is a queerish one for you.

For I looked into its pages, and I read the book of fate,
And saw Fox-hunting abolished by an order from the State ;

Saw the heavens filled with guano, and the clouds at men's
command
Raining down unsavoury liquids for the benefit of land ;

Saw the airy navies earthward bear the planetary swell,
And the long projected railroad made from Halifax to H—l ;

Saw the landlords yield their acres after centuries of wrongs,
Cotton lords turn country gentlemen in patriotic throngs ;

Queen, religion, State abandoned, and the flags of party furled
In the Government of Cobden, and the dotage of the world.

Then shall exiled common sense espouse some other country's
cause,
And the rogues shall thrive in England, bonneting the slumbering
laws.

The Sport of Our Ancestors

Hark ! my ~~merry~~ merry comrades call me, and Jack Morgan blows his horn,

I, to whom their foolish pastime is an object of my scorn.

Can a sight be more disgusting—more absurd a paradox,
Than two hundred people riding *at* a miserable fox ?

Will his capture on the morrow any satisfaction bring ?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have done so flat a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! I 'm an idiot for my
pains ;
Nature made for every sportsman an inferior set of brains.

Here at last I 'll stay no longer, let me seek for some abode,
Deep in some provincial county far from rail or turnpike road.

There to break all links of habit, and to find a secret charm
In the mysteries of manuring and the produce of a farm.

To deplore the fall of barley, to admire the rise of peas,
Over flagons of October, giant mounds of bread and cheese.

Never company to dinner, never visitors from town,
Just the Parson and the Doctor (Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown).

Droops the heavy conversation to an after-dinner snort,
And articulation ceases with the sacred flask of port.

These, methinks, would be enjoyment more than at the festive
board,
Than the hunger-mocking, kickshaw-covered table of a lord.

Mr. Bromley-Davenport

Then my heart shall beat no longer with my passion's foolish
throbs,

I will wed some vulgar woman—she will rear my race of snobs.

Double-jointed, mutton-fisted, they shall run but shall not ride,
Hunting with the York and Nasty or the harriers of Brookside.

Fool again ! the dream ! the fancy ! but I *know* my words are
stuff,

For I hold the swell provincial lower than the Melton muff.

I to hunt with fustian jackets, my remaining years to pass
With the refuse of protection—in a land devoid of grass.

Tied to one perpetual woman, what to me were soil or clime,
I who never could endure the same for ten days at a time ?

I who hold it better to pursue the patriarchal plan
Than tamely to submit to a monopoly of man ?

Not in vain the distance beckons. What 's that skirting the hill
side ?

'Tis the fox ! I 'll bet a hundred ! forward ! forward ! let us
ride.

I 'm before them, and they d—n me ; but no matter, go along !
Better fifty yards before them than behind among the throng.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! was that an over ? What ! old Rambler ! is he
dead ?

What of that ? pick up the pieces ; he was mortal ! go ahead.

The Sport of Our Ancestors

Oh, Sir Richard, you may holloa ! but my spirit knows no bounds ;
Curse the scent, and hang the huntsman ; rot the master, d—n the
hounds !

Lost the fox ! 'Twas I that did it ! Oh, of course, I always do ;
Comes Sir Richard, black as thunder. I 'll evaporate—adieu.

Plough the grass, erect wire fences, shoot the foxes, freeze and
snow ;
I can catch the train at Leicester ; so to Euston Square I go.

CHAPTER VI

BECKFORD

BECKFORD'S '*Thoughts upon Hunting*' was published in 1781, and has a wider reputation than any other work of its kind. The author was a Dorsetshire squire, but not of the type of West Country squire depicted by Fielding. He was well travelled and well read, and his book is cultivated and amusing. A contemporary writer says of him: 'Never had fox or hare the honour of being chased to death by so accomplished a huntsman; never was a huntsman's dinner graced by such urbanity and wit. He would bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in excellent French.'

His treatise upon Fox-hunting marks the early years of the increased pace that first became fashionable just after the middle of the eighteenth century. Such men as Meynell, Musters, and Smith-Barry were the pioneers of the new system of finding the Fox in his kennel at eleven o'clock and making him fly or die, instead of dragging up to him in the small hours of the morning. Hounds were now bred for stoutness and speed. Beckford was in favour of a Hound of the middle size. 'I believe,' he says, 'all animals of that description are strongest, and best able to endure fatigue. . . .

The Sport of Our Ancestors

Such hounds will not suffer themselves to be disgraced in any country.' His remarks about the handling of Hounds in the field are as fresh to-day as on the day they were written. He liked to see the thing neatly and quickly done, with the least possible expenditure of time and tissue. Fox-hunting had become the amusement of gentlemen, 'the intemperance, clownishness, and ignorance of the old fox-hunter' being 'quite worn out.' It therefore ought to be carried out in a gentlemanly manner at a gentlemanly hour, though, if Hounds are out of blood, they should be taken out at an early hour when the Fox has a full belly, so as to give them every advantage. Beckford is indeed sound according to the light of modern experience on almost every point.

There are, however, two points on which we venture to disagree with him. One is his recommendation that barley-meal should be mixed with the oatmeal. We have before us an edition of '*Thoughts upon Hunting*' printed in 1798, with pencil notes in the margin evidently written by some old M.F.H. who knew what he was talking about. 'Don't use barley at all,' says he; 'oatmeal and flesh are the best possible food for hounds.' And later on, 'Hounds cannot run on barley-meal, as those who try will prove it.' This gentleman was quite correct, if not quite grammatical. The other matter in which Beckford may be said to be heterodox is with regard to some remarks he makes about the use of the whip. After posing as an opponent of any unnecessary punishment as being nothing less than gratui-

Beckford

tous cruelty, this really great sportsman actually says that if any Hounds 'should be more riotous than the rest, they may receive a few cuts in the morning before they leave the kennel.' It is almost incredible.

It is true that Beckford, like others of his age, was obsessed with the idea of riot, which does not for some reason seem to trouble us so much in these days ; but that a beautiful creature like a Foxhound, or indeed any dumb animal, should be made to suffer pain for no reason or fault is positively revolting, to say nothing of its being quite useless. Yet Beckford returns to the charge on the very next page : 'Such hounds as are notorious offenders should also feel the lash and hear a rate as they go to the covert ; it may be a useful hint to them, and may prevent a severer flogging afterwards.' Fancy a modern huntsman arriving at the meet with some of the Hounds half cowed, and their beautiful coats marked with the thong as a prophylactic against hunting hares during the day ! We know of at least one establishment where he would not do it more than once. But as a matter of fact, no modern huntsman could be found who would countenance such a brutal and a senseless thing. To-day we are wiser and more merciful.

Now for something more pleasant. Beckford is particularly happy in everything he says about hunting the Fox. His remarks about what to do, or rather what not to do, when Hounds are at fault are curiously like those of Lord Henry Bentinck in '*Goodall's Practice*,' and are in harmony

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with the experience of every authority. And this experience teaches you that when the Hounds come to a check every one should stand still, huntsman included, until the Hounds have done trying for themselves. ‘The huntsman at a check had better let his hounds alone. . . .’ ‘Hounds that are not used to be cast will themselves acquire a better cast than it is in the power of any huntsman to give them ; will spread more, and try better for the scent. . . . I never approve of their being cast so long as they are inclined to hunt,’ and so on. Beckford, like all good judges, was an inveterate opponent of fancy casts. His own huntsman was always expected to make the orthodox circle first of all before flying any kites on his own account. But although Beckford thoroughly appreciated the golden rule of leaving Hounds alone at the right moment, he quite rightly doubted whether a pack of Hounds, always left entirely alone, would kill a Fox at all. In fact, he goes so far as to say that a Foxhound who will not bear lifting is not worth the keeping. But he adds to this a most invaluable qualification : ‘Hounds never, in my opinion (unless in particular cases, or when you go to a halloo), should be taken entirely off their noses, but when lifted, should be constantly made to try as they go.’ This looks like a contradiction in terms, and maybe the sentence is rather slipshod. When Hounds are lifted in the proper sense of the term they should be deliberately taken off their noses, and not allowed to put them down again until the huntsman desires them to do so. But it is easy to see what Beckford means.

Beckford

He means that unless they are being taken to a holloa, they should never be taken off their noses when they are at fault. In fact, the huntsman should be able to move them about with their noses down. This is not always easy to do, and the power of doing it is what distinguishes the artist and places him above his fellows. All good packs of Hounds spread out like a fan immediately they lose the scent, and separate this way and that. When the huntsman has presently to manœuvre them, for instance to get on to fresh or favourable ground, he should on no account call them together again, but move them in extended order in front of his horse. The open formation they have adopted is the most favourable one for covering the ground and recovering the line, and it is a wicked thing to spoil it. Yet how often does one see the huntsman call the Hounds together, trot off to the place where he wishes to make the ground good, and then ask them to spread out again? They probably think, as Beckford suggests, that he has abandoned the pursuit altogether, and is going to look for another Fox. When he gets to the place where he wants them to try again, much time is wasted in getting them to spread and put their heads down, if indeed he succeeds in doing so at all.

Letter XX. in '*Thoughts upon Hunting*' is one of the most intelligent and sensitive pieces of writing to be found in any text-book of the Chase, and marks Peter Beckford as one of the great master-minds in the study of the science and art of Fox-hunting. It is lucky for posterity that he

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was able to reduce to writing the result of his keen observation, and to do it in a style which is so readable. He never gets very far away from the laugh. He writes so naturally and fluently that he sometimes gets a little off the line, and then sets himself straight by a footnote. For instance, in this Letter XX. he opens up a very interesting speculation by saying that it is a great fault in a huntsman to persevere in bad weather, when Hounds cannot run, and when there is not a probability of killing a Fox. But no sooner are the words written than he detects the underlying fallacy of this proposition, and says that although he would not go out on a very windy day, 'yet a bad scenting day is sometimes of service to a pack of foxhounds—they acquire patience from it and method of hunting.'

Perhaps Beckford paid all the expenses himself and owned the Hounds he hunted, and in the Dorsetshire of the eighteenth century only had a small band of followers, probably consisting of a few neighbouring squires, to propitiate. If so, he could pick his days and go home when he liked. A modern M.F.H. is expected to hunt in all weathers except a hard frost or a dense fog. This convention saves trouble in the long run. Who shall say what is the exact degree of wind that should keep the Hounds at home? How did Mr. Beckford know that the tempest would not abate in the afternoon?

Letter XIII., which is here presented, is the best description of a run from the point of view of the Hound man that has yet appeared in print. The author was a Hound man, first and last and all the time. '*Thoughts upon*

Beckford

Hunting’ contains but little about horses and nothing about how to ride them. The horse was just an accessory of the Chase. This is where Beckford differs from the other authors in this volume. He says not a word about bull-finches, brooks, posts and rails, cutting people down, thinning out the field, and so forth. His whole soul is concentrated on the Fox and the Hounds. At times he pours it out in language which, if not quite blank verse, contains at least as much poetry as the lines of Somerville whom he quotes so freely. If indeed he was inspired by Somerville—and he presumably wrote the chapter with ‘*The Chase*’ open before him—he certainly ‘gets it over’ a great deal better than his model. So much better that he might almost be using Somerville as a foil. The beauty of the thing is that it not only throbs from start to finish with the joy of the pursuit, but also gives us at the same time the intimate knowledge of the expert.

A FOX CHASE

Let us suppose that we are arrived at the cover side :—

‘ Delightful scene !
Where all around is gay, men, horses, dogs ;
And in each smiling countenance appears
Fresh blooming health, and universal joy.’

SOMERVILLE.

Now let your huntsman throw in his hounds as quietly as he can, and let the two whippers-in keep wide of him on

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either side, so that a single hound may not escape them ; let them be attentive to his halloo, and be ready to encourage, or rate, as that directs ; he will, of course, draw up the wind, for reasons which I shall give in another place. Now, if you can keep your brother sportsmen in order, and put any discretion into them, you are in luck ; they more frequently do harm than good : if it be possible, persuade those who wish to halloo the fox off to stand quiet under the cover side, and on no account to halloo him too soon ; if they do, he most certainly will turn back again : could you entice them all into the cover, your sport, in all probability, would not be the worse for it.

How well the hounds spread the cover ! the huntsman, you see, is quite deserted, and his horse, who so lately had a crowd at his heels, has not now one attendant left. How steadily they draw ! you hear not a single hound ; yet none are idle. Is not this better than to be subject to continual disappointment from the eternal babbling of unsteady hounds ?

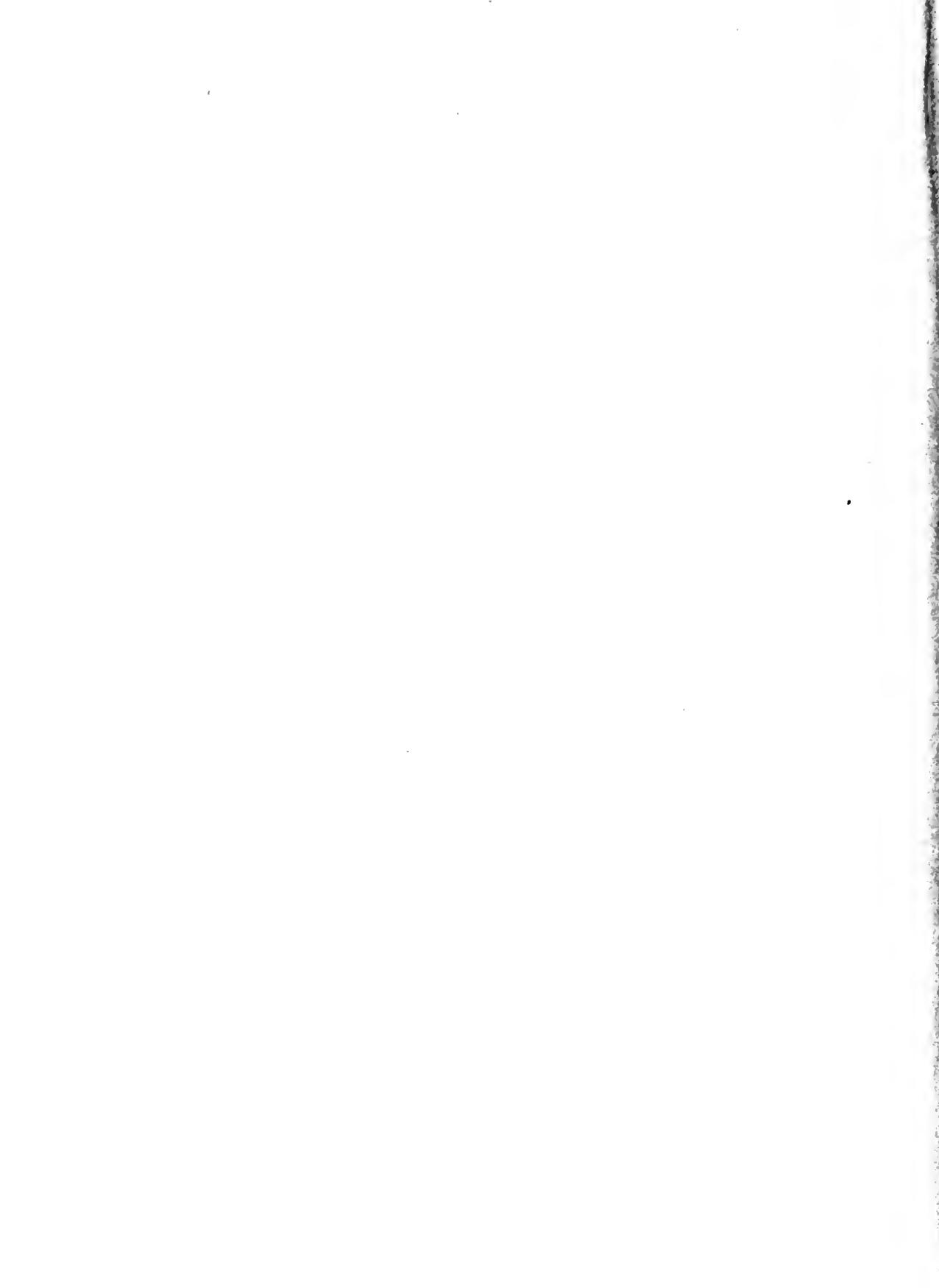
‘ See ! how they range
Dispers’d, how busily this way and that
They cross, examining with curious nose
Each likely haunt. Hark ! on the drag I hear
Their doubtful notes, preluding to a cry
More nobly full, and swell’d with every mouth.’

SOMERVILE.

How musical their tongues !—And as they get nearer to him, how the chorus fills !—Hark ! he is found.—Now, where are all your sorrows, your cares, ye gloomy souls ?



"NOW TELL YOUR HUNTSMAN TO THROW IN HIS HOUNDS AS QUIETLY AS HE CAN."



Beckford

Or where your pains, and aches, ye complaining ones ? one halloo has dispelled them all.—What a crash they make ! and echo seemingly takes place to repeat the sounds. The astonished traveller forsakes his road, lured by its melody ; the listening plowman now stops his plow ; and every distant shepherd neglects his flock, and runs to see him break.—What joy ! what eagerness in every face !

‘ How happy art thou, man, when thou ’rt no more
Thyself ! when all the pangs that grind thy soul,
In rapture and in sweet oblivion lost,
Yield a short interval, and ease from pain ! ’

SOMERVILE.

Mark how he runs the covert’s utmost limits, yet dares not venture forth ; the hounds are still too near ! That check is lucky !—now, if our friends head him not, he will soon be off—hark ! they halloo : by G—d he ’s gone !

‘ Hark ! what loud shouts
Re-echo thro’ the grooves ! he breaks away :
Shrill horns proclaim his flight. Each straggling hound
Strains o’er the lawn to reach the distant pack,
’Tis triumph all, and joy.’

SOMERVILE.

Now huntsman, get on with the head hounds ; the whipper-in will bring on the others after you : keep an attentive eye on the leading hounds, that should the scent fail them, you may know at least how far they brought it.

Mind Galloper, how he leads them !—It is difficult to distinguish which is first, they run in such a style ; yet he is the foremost hound.—The goodness of his nose is not

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less excellent than his speed :—how he carries the scent ! and when he loses it, see how eagerly he flings to recover it again ! There—now he 's at head again ! See how they top the hedge !—Now, how they mount the hill !—Observe what a head they carry, and shew me, if thou canst, one shuffler or shirker amongst them all : are they not like a parcel of brave fellows, who, when they engage in an undertaking, determine to share its fatigue and its dangers, equally amongst them ?

‘ Far o'er the rocky hills we range,
And dangerous our course ; but in the brave
True courage never fails. In vain the stream
In foaming eddies whirls, in vain the ditch
Wide gaping threatens death. The craggy steep,
Where the poor dizzy shepherd crawls with care,
And clings to every twig, gives us no pain ;
But down we sweep, as stoops the falcon bold
To pounce his prey. Then up the opponent hill,
By the swift motion flung, we mount aloft ;
So ships in winter seas now sliding sink
Adown the steepy wave, then toss'd on high
Ride on the billows, and defy the storm.’

SOMERVILE.

It was then the fox I saw, as we came down the hill ;—those crows directed me which way to look, and the sheep ran from him as he passed along. The hounds are now on the very spot, yet the sheep stop them not, for they dash beyond them. Now see with what eagerness they cross the plain !—Galloper no longer keeps his place, Brusher takes it—see how he flings for the scent, and how impetu-

Beckford

ously he runs!—How eagerly he took the lead, and how he strives to keep it—yet Victor comes up apace.—He reaches him! See what an excellent race it is between them! It is doubtful which will reach the covert first.—How equally they run!—how eagerly they strain! Now Victor—Victor!—Ah! Brusher, you are beaten; Victor first tops the hedge.—See there! see how they all take it in their strokes! the hedge cracks with their weight, so many jump at once.

Now hastes the whipper-in to the other side of the cover; he is right unless he head the fox.

‘Heav’ns! what melodious strains! how beats our hearts
Big with tumultuous joy! the loaded gales
Breathe harmony; and as the tempest drives
From wood to wood, thro’ ev’ry dark recess
The forest thunders, and the mountains shake.’

SOMERVILE.

Listen!—the hounds have turned. They are now in two parts: the fox has been headed back, and we have changed at last.

Now, my lad, mind the huntsman’s halloo, and stop to those hounds which he encourages. He is right!—that, doubtless, is the hunted fox.—Now they are off again.

‘What lengths we pass! where will the thundering chace
Lead us bewilder’d! smooth as swallows skim
The new-thorn mead, and far more swift we fly.
See my brave pack; how to the head they press,
Justling in close array, then more diffuse
Obliquely wheel, while from their op’ning mouths
The vouldied thunder breaks.

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Look back and view

The strange confusion of the vale below,
Where sore vexation reigns ;

Old age laments

His vigour spent ; the tall, plump, brawny youth
Curses his cumbrous bulk, and envies now
The short pygmean race he whilom kenn'd
With proud insulting leer. A chosen few
Alone the sport enjoy, nor droop beneath
Their pleasing toils.'

SOMERVILE.

Ha ! a check.—Now for a moment's patience !—We press too close upon the hounds !—Huntsman, stand still ! as they want you not.—How admirably they spread ! how wide they cast ! Is there a single hound that does not try ? If there be, ne'er shall he hunt again. There, True-man is on the scent—he feathers, yet still is doubtful—'tis right ! How readily they join him ! See those wide-casting hounds, how they fly forward to recover the ground they have lost !—Mind Lightning, how she dashes ; and Mungo, how he works ! Old Frantic, too, now pushes forward ; she knows, as well as we, the fox is sinking.

‘ Ha ! yet he flies, nor yields
To black despair. But one loose more, and all
His wiles are vain. Hark ! thro' yon village now
The rattling clamour rings. The barns, the cots,
And leafless elms return the joyous sounds.
Thro' every homestall, and thro' ev'ry yard,
His midnight walks, panting, forlorn, he flies.’

SOMERVILE.

Huntsman ! at fault at last ? How far did you bring the

Beckford

scent?—Have the hounds made their own cast?—Now make yours. You see that sheep-dog has coursed the fox;—get forward with your hounds and make a wide cast.

Hark! that halloo is indeed a lucky one.—If we can hold him on, we may yet recover him; for a fox, so much distressed, must stop at last. We shall now see if they will hunt as well as run; for there is but little scent, and the impending cloud still makes that little less. How they enjoy the scent!—see how busy they all are, and how each in his turn prevails!

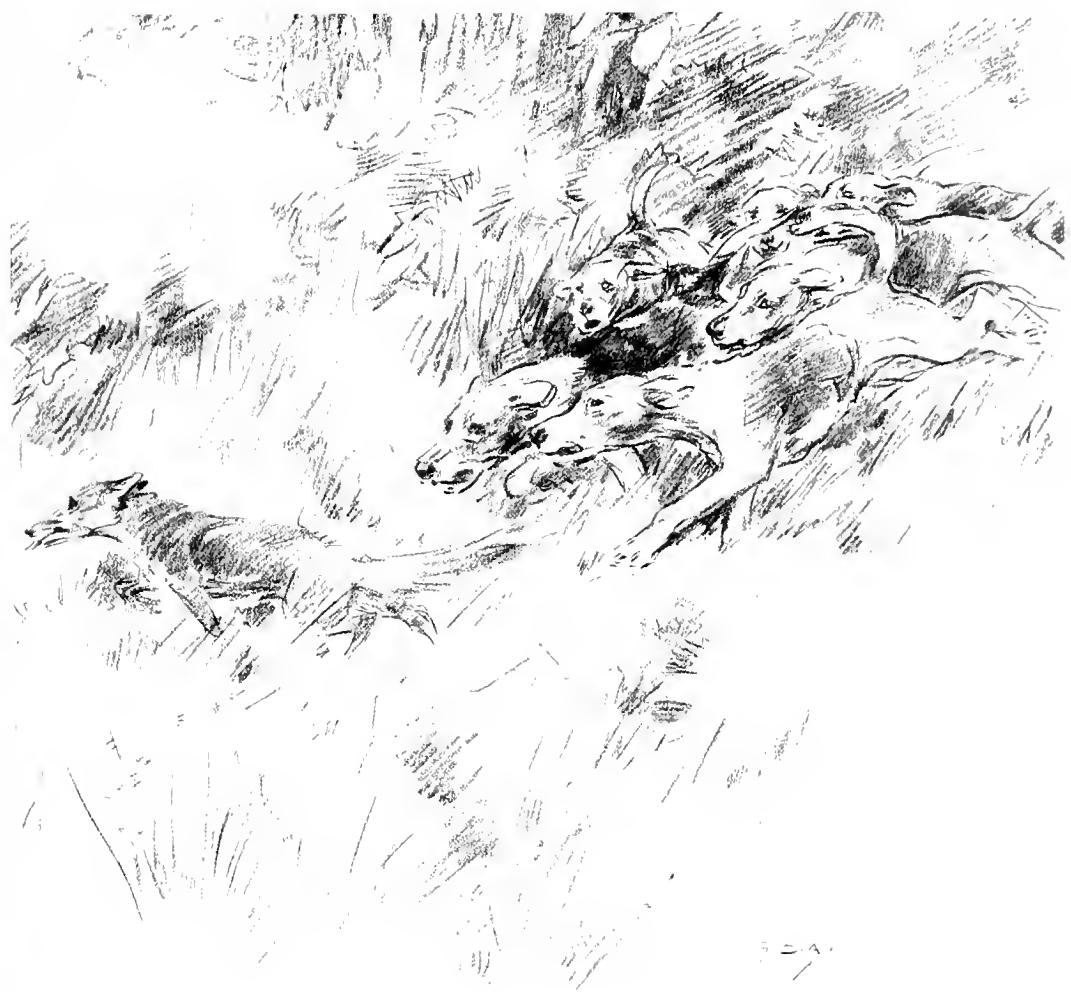
Huntsman! be quiet. Whilst the scent was good, you press'd on your hounds; it was well done: when they came to a check, you stood still, and interrupted them not; they were afterwards at fault; you made your cast with judgment, and lost no time. You now must let them hunt;—with such a cold scent as this you can do no good; they must do it all themselves;—lift them now, and not a hound will stoop again.—Ha! a high road, at such a time as this, when the tenderest-nosed hound can hardly own the scent! Another fault! That man at work, then, has headed back the fox. Huntsman! cast not your hounds now, you see they have overrun the scent; have a little patience, and let them, for once, try back.

We now must give them time;—see where they bend towards yonder furze brake.—I wish he may have stopped there!—Mind that old hound, how he dashes o'er the furze; I think he winds him.—Now for a fresh entapis! Hark! they halloo! Aye, there he goes.

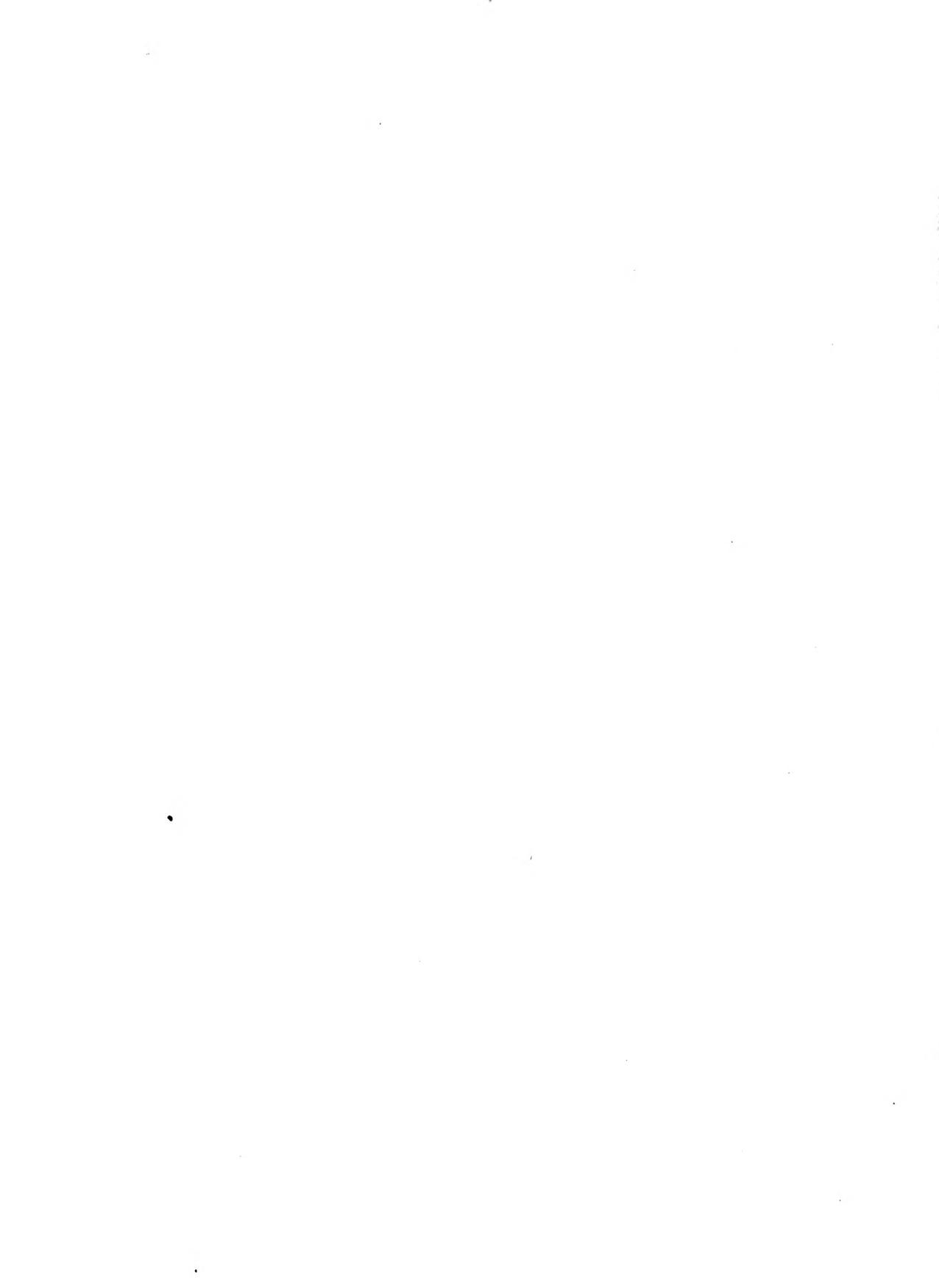
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It is nearly over with him ; had the hounds caught view, he must have died.—He will hardly reach the cover ; see how they gain upon him at every stroke !—It is an admirable race ! yet the cover saves him.

Now be quiet, and he cannot escape us ; we have the wind of the hounds, and cannot be better placed : how short he runs ! he is now in the very strongest part of the cover.—What a crash ! Every hound is in, and every hound is running for him. That was a quick turn !—Again another !—he 's put to his last shifts.—Now Mischief is at his heels, and death is not far off.—Ha ! they all stop at once ;—all silent, and yet no earth is open. Listen ! now they are at him again ! Did you hear that hound catch him ? They overran the scent, and the fox had laid down behind them. Now, Reynard, look to yourself ! How quick they all give their tongues ! Little Dreadnought, how he works him ! the terriers too, they are now squeaking at him.—How close Vengeance pursues ! how terribly she presses ! it is just up with him !—Gods ! what a crash they make ; the whole wood resounds !—That turn was very short ! There !—now !—aye, now they have him ! Who-hoop !



"Gads! WHAT A CRASH THEY MAKE!"



CHAPTER VII

‘NIMROD’

MR. APPERLEY, whose literary name was ‘Nimrod,’ was born in 1777 and died in 1843. He was at one time the Squire of Beaurepaire in the Vine Country, adjoining the property of that name belonging to Mr. Chute, but owing to financial trouble he took to the profession of writing about the sport that he loved. He pursued this profession with much industry and vigour, being a well-documented and painstaking analyst of everything to do with the Chase. From the point of view of history his work is valuable, and if he had contented himself with noting and chronicling the things that he saw and understood, it would have been even purer and sounder than it is. But although there is nothing superficial about Mr. Apperley’s work, a certain pretentiousness crops up every now and then which would be irritating if it were taken seriously. For instance, in this very paper, he is kind enough to patronise the sixth Duke of Beaufort and his establishment by announcing that he ‘did not consider his Grace a sportsman of the *very first class.*’¹ There are some indications, which will be referred to presently, that ‘Nimrod’ was not himself in the very first class as an authority on the huntsman’s craft

¹ Our italics.

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which he discusses with so much assurance. But the not too modest tone of his writings, fortified though it be by a lavish use of the first personal pronoun, is a minor blemish when it is set beside the masterly manner in which he has illuminated the Sport of our Ancestors. For, indeed, when he was not thinking too much about himself, he could write well. His facility was inspired by his genuine love of horses and Hounds, and enriched by his acquaintance with many men and countries. The only other writer in the same line as 'Nimrod' is 'The Druid' the author of gossipy volumes such as '*Post and Paddock*', '*Scott and Sebright*', and '*Saddle and Sirloin*'. 'The Druid' had certainly amassed a vast amount of hunting lore, but he can only be placed second, *longo intervallo*, to 'Nimrod.' He is all very well as a reference, but he could not have written a classic like '*The Chace*'.

For it is indeed a classic. In the small space of a few paragraphs the author skilfully traces the evolution of the Chase from the fourteenth century down to a meet of the Quorn Hounds at Ashby Pasture in February 1826. The famous amateur huntsman, Squire Osbaldeston, is the central figure. The impression one forms of 'The Squire' is that of a hard-bitten, varminty little North Countryman who liked riding better than hunting, and who was the darling of the English sporting public on account of his being ready to take risks and to back himself to perform any feat of nerve or endurance connected with horses. He was, in fact, 'a Sport.' Not the vinous eccentric John

‘Nimrod’

Mytton sort of ‘Sport,’ but some one much more genuine, who rode fifty four-mile heats in less than ten hours, and hunted his own hounds in the Quorn country six times a week, sometimes having two packs out in the day. Does the fact of being a light-weight add to the popularity of a sportsman? We certainly enjoy to-day the privilege of living in the same age as an illustrious example of a light-weight sportsman who is the most popular man in the British Empire. Anyhow, Osbaldeston was almost the only one of ‘Nimrod’s’ heroes whom the author did not try to patronise in writing about him. Mr. Corbet was another. These two enjoy the distinction of receiving from ‘Nimrod’ nothing but unqualified admiration. They represent two opposite types in the gallery of our ancestors. Mr. Corbet, tall, distinguished, courteous, an aristocrat and a Fox-hunter to his finger-tips, was a Hound man who sate on his horse like a gentleman but never jumped a fence. Mr. Osbaldeston, small of stature, excitable, ready of tongue, was a horseman rather than a Hound man, and never stopped to open a gate. Each had a famous Foxhound; Mr. Corbet’s Trojan, and Mr. Osbaldeston’s Furrier. But it should not be forgotten that Trojan, by Lord Spencer’s Trueboy, was bred by his master, while Furrier, though technically Mr. Osbaldeston’s Furrier, came in a draft from Belvoir, being by their Saladin. Furrier was a short, jumped-up kind of dog who did not meet you very cleverly on the flags. It was said that his being crooked was due to his not having been allowed his liberty when he was at

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walk. But in spite of the fact that he would not win at Peterborough if he were alive now, Furrier was an undeniable Foxhound, and his name appears in all the best modern pedigrees.

Mr. Osbaldeston was delighted with Furrier. Like master like Hound. There was nothing of the line-hunter about either of them: if 'Nimrod' correctly describes Mr. Osbaldeston, he was a bit wild, and certainly premature in speaking to the Hounds. On the approach to the covert, 'Nimrod' tells us that he cheered them in cap in hand, saying, 'Hark in, Hark!' and later on he is made to scream with his finger to his ear before a single Hound has said a word. Now of three things, one: either the method here adopted of cheering Hounds before they open was the fashion in those days; or Mr. Osbaldeston was an impostor; or 'Nimrod' was an ignoramus. It is impossible to believe that to cheer Hounds before they found was ever the fashion at any period in the whole history of the Chase. We would wager a very large stake that neither Will Barrow nor Philip Payne nor any of the great contemporary huntsmen ever did anything of the kind. Did Mr. Osbaldeston do it? Almost certainly not. 'Nimrod' then is the culprit. Here is another solecism. While the Hounds were drawing, Rasselas showed himself and took a short turn in the open. Now by all the rules of Fox-hunting, the whipper-in should have kept his mouth shut; any noise outside prevents the Fox breaking covert and distracts the attention of the Hounds inside. It is true that whippers-in con-

‘Nimrod’

stantly have to be checked for rating a stray Hound at these critical moments: but such a pontiff as ‘Nimrod’ makes himself out to be ought to have known all this, and to have known that unless the Fox has gone, Hounds who fling outside the covert will invariably turn back to the cry, and that to holloa at them is an offence. Yet ‘Nimrod’ makes the boy crack his whip and rate at Rasselas as if he was running a hare. But this is not all. After nineteen quick minutes the Hounds have overrun the scent, having been pressed too hard by the horses. The Squire ‘tells off’ his field quite correctly, saying they had themselves to thank for the delay, and then proceeds to *blow his horn*¹ ‘in order’ to bring them back to the point at which the scent had failed. ‘Nimrod’ had never, as far as we know, hunted Hounds himself; but any one who has hunted Hounds will tell you that when they have been running hard and suddenly throw up is the very moment when absolute silence is the only thing that can retrieve the situation. But to blow the horn and get their heads up! ‘Nimrod’ says that Mr. Osbaldeston’s Hounds came back at one blast. If they did, they cannot have had much courage.

When a highly-bred pack of Foxhounds have been running full cry for nineteen minutes and come to a check, the first thing they do is to quarter the ground and fling themselves this way and that, all with heads down, and some with hackles up, to recover the scent. There is nothing more beautiful and wonderful than this in the whole of

¹ Our italics.

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Fox-hunting. Any mere human being in a red coat who tries to correct animal instinct at sublime moments like these, by making a noise on a copper instrument, is at once a Philistine and a fool—a Philistine to try his hand on what nature is doing for him so much more artistically than he can do it for himself ; a fool because no good pack of Foxhounds would take the slightest notice of him if it were anything like a scenting day. Major Whyte Melville in '*Riding Recollections*' is in the same kind of bad hurry with Sir Richard Sutton's Hounds. They had been running for thirty minutes when up went their heads. Sir Richard is made to shout at Ben Morgan to 'turn them.' Ben Morgan rides a half-beaten horse at a double flight of posts and rails with a ditch in the middle and one on each side, with the result that may be imagined. But to show how unnecessary was all this expenditure of tissue, Tranby spoke to his Fox before Morgan had time to pick up the pieces !

Mr. Osbaldeston's second-horse man must have been a wonderful man. This fine run was a ten-mile point accomplished in two minutes over the hour. It takes some swallowing ; but the thing could only be done at something like top speed all the way. Yet Mr. Osbaldeston contrived to change horses at the right moment, and to appear on Clasher when Ashton was getting blown. How did the second-horse man get there ? Not by riding to points, for according to time and distance the line from Ashby Pasture to Woodwell Head must have been nearly straight. He can only have done the deed by riding fence

‘Nimrod’

for fence after his master. This was the fashion for the second-horse man of a heavy-weight when the second-horse system was first introduced. But when the master was himself a light-weight there was nothing to be gained by it. But we must not be captious in attempting to review ‘Nimrod’s’ essay. It is admitted to be one of the best, if not the very best, of descriptions of a run from the riding point of view, just as Beckford’s chapter is the best description extant of a run from the point of view of the Hound man.

His famous chapter on ‘The Road’ is the only extract in this book which has no direct reference to Fox-hunting. But it is so vitally interesting in letting us see the conditions under which our ancestors travelled from place to place, that it is here inserted; moreover, at this time of day anything that recalls the charm of driving behind quick-stepping horses is surely worth preserving. This charm had warmed even the rugged heart of Dr. Johnson. On driving away from a visit to Lord Scarsdale at Kedleston, the old man—he was then sixty-eight—felt a rush of gaiety, and exclaimed to Boswell: ‘If I had no duties, and no reference to futurity, I would spend my life in driving briskly in a post-chaise with a pretty woman; but she should be one who could understand me, and would add something to the conversation.’ No one who is not grossly unsusceptible would after reading this take a lady out in a motor-car without wishing that some fairy could change it into a phaeton drawn by two well-bred horses. But

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this chapter is not reprinted with the sole object of recalling the ancient charm of 'The Road.' It is of peculiar interest to-day because, since the automobile was invented, the old turnpikes have in a sense come into their own again, and carry on their surface in motor-cars the descendants of those who used the same routes in their travelling carriages, post-chaises, and road coaches. The talk of the traveller to-day in the lounges of provincial hotels is curiously like what it must have been a hundred years ago. The state of the roads, the relative merits of the wayside inns, the condition of the carriages, the best routes by which to avoid the traffic: these are the topics now common alike to us and to our ancestors, having been in abeyance during the years when the railroad was the sole method of long-distance transport. In view of its history the revival of the road is full of interest. Not the least startling thing is the comparatively small difference between the continuous average speed of the motor-car and that of the fast road coach. One would hardly believe that the motor-car only performs a long journey twice as fast as the old mails. Yet it is so. A motor-car, making allowance for delay by the traffic and other hindrances, cannot sustain an average pace over a long journey—say from London to Edinburgh—of more than twenty miles an hour. The distance is four hundred miles, and this was covered by the old Edinburgh Mail at the rate of eleven miles an hour, stoppages included. These stoppages allowed for changing horses, as well as one hour for meals, of which twenty

‘Nimrod’

minutes were usually allocated to breakfast and forty minutes to luncheon. The operation of changing horses was accomplished in less than a minute. Wonderful work ! No chain, buckle, trace, or rein was ever handled twice. One of the most memorable feats on the Road took place during the coaching revival, some forty years after the railroads were started. Over twelve miles an hour was the pace sustained when Jim Selby drove from London to Brighton and back, covering the whole distance of a hundred miles in seven hours and fifty minutes. This achievement in the annals of the Road finds its counterpart in the annals of the Chase in the match between Mr. Smith-Barry’s Bluecap and Wanton on one side, and on the other a couple of Hounds belonging to Mr. Meynell, over the Beacon Course at Newmarket, a distance of four and a half miles, which Bluecap covered at a rate of over twenty-four miles an hour. Wanton, sired by Bluecap, came in second ; Mr. Meynell’s Hounds were nowhere. These two events are the outstanding records of speed in the history of The Chase and The Road.

The road coaches had just about reached perfection when they were supplanted by the railroads, at a time when the service of the best of them was as perfect as human skill could make it. The coachmen, the guards, and the ostlers all provided highly-skilled labour, and took a pride in their work. The coaches and the tackle were the best that the world has ever produced. It is true that the horses did not cost much money, but no amount of

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money could have produced more than an average of eleven miles an hour, and it is certain that the proprietors knew their business. 'Nimrod' says that the average life of a horse in a fast road coach was four years, exactly the same period that was reckoned to be the average life of the London omnibus horse.

Every line of 'Nimrod's' paper on 'The Road' is excellent reading. With eloquence based on knowledge he treats of an art which is not only fascinating in itself, but particularly agreeable to the genius of the English people. No other nation has ever been able to couple horses together, harness them to a carriage, and drive them when harnessed with the same ease, neatness, and precision as was displayed by our own artists in the twenties and the thirties. The exercise of their art was interrupted by the steam-engine, but it was revived for amateurs under the auspices of the old survivors of the Road. Yet it is strange that, in a country which has produced the best coachmen the world has ever seen, the vast majority of amateurs never really knew how to drive, though they were continually driving, and more often than not got to the end of the journey without an accident. Before the invention of motor-cars, when every one who could afford it kept his or her own carriage and drove his or her own horses, how many people knew enough to sit straight on the box seat and to hold the whip and reins properly? No one can drive in good style by the light of nature. He must have been taught the technique by a real coachman. The difference between those who have

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been taught to drive properly and those who have not is easily detected by the initiated. Here are two tests : When you are meeting any one who is driving one or more horses, look at his hands ; if he knows how to drive, you will only see their backs. The other test is to mark what he does with his whip when he puts it down as his carriage is in motion. If he puts the butt end on the footboard and leans the other on the back of the seat, he is a coachman ; if he sticks it into the socket when he has no further use for it, he is a tailor. The man who rests it on the footboard has probably learnt to do so from driving a coach, when to put the whip into the socket is to invite disaster from the trees. The whip should never be put in the socket except when the coach or carriage is standing still. But it is of no avail to go into all this now, though we may now and again read through ‘Nimrod’s’ chapter and try to wonder what it was like to leave Shrewsbury on the top of a coach at six o’clock in the morning and not get to London till nine o’clock at night.

THE CHACE

‘ Listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill
Thro’ the high wood echoing shrill.’—MILTON.

In various old writers—‘*The Mayster of the Game*,’ for instance—we find lively pictures of the ancient English chace, which in many respects, no doubt, was of a more

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noble and manly nature than that of the present day. The wolf, the bear, the boar, were among the favourite beasts of ‘venery’ ; and none can doubt that the habit of pursuing such animals, independently of giving vigour to the frame and strength to the constitution, must have nourished that martial ardour and fearless intrepidity, which, when exerted in the field of battle, generally won the day for our gallant ancestors. The hart, the stag, the hind, the roebuck, and the hare are likewise constantly mentioned, as is also the wild or martin cat, now nearly extinct ; but the fox does not appear to have been included in the list of the Anglo-Norman sportsman. The first public notice of this now much-esteemed animal occurs in the reign of Richard II., which unfortunate monarch gives permission, by charter, to the abbot of Peterborough to hunt the fox. In Twice’s ‘*Treatise on the Craft of Hunting*’ Reynard is thus classed :—

‘ And for to sette young hunterys in the way
To venery, I cast me fyrist to go :
Of which four bestes be, that is to say,
The hare, the herte, the wulf, and the wild boor.
But there ben other bestes five of the chase ;
The buck the first, the seconde is the do ;
The fox the third, which hath ever hard grace ;
The forthe the martyn, and the last the roe.’

It is indeed quite apparent that, until at most a hundred and fifty years ago, the fox was considered an inferior animal of the chace—the stag, buck, and even hare ranking before him. Previously to this period, he was generally taken in nets or hays, set on the outside of his earth : when



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he *was*¹ hunted, it was among rocks and crags, or woods inaccessible to horsemen ; such a scene, in short, or very nearly so, as we have, drawn to the life, in Dandie Dinmont’s primitive *chasse* in ‘*Guy Mannering*.’ If the reader will turn to the author of *Hudibras*’s essay, entitled ‘*Of the Bumpkin, or Country Squire*,’ he will find a great deal about the hare, but not one word of the fox. What a revolution had occurred before Squire Western sat for his picture ! About half-way between these pieces appeared Somervile’s poem of ‘*The Chase*,’ in which fox-hunting is treated of with less of detail, and much less of enthusiasm, than either stag-hunting or *hare-hunting* !

It is difficult to determine when the first regularly appointed pack of foxhounds appeared among us. Dan Chaucer gives us the thing in embryo :—

‘ Aha, the fox ! and after him they ran ;
And eke with staves many another man.
Ran Coll our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerlond,
And Malkin with her distaff in her hond,
Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges,
So fered were for berking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought her hertes brake.’

At the next stage, no doubt, neighbouring farmers kept one or two hounds each, and, on stated days, met for the purpose of destroying a fox that had been doing damage in their poultry-yards. By-and-by a few couple of strong hounds seem to have been kept by small country esquires,

¹ The words in italics are in italics in the original.

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or yeomen, who could afford the expense, and they joined packs. Such were called trencher hounds—implying that they ran loose about the house, and were not confined in kennel. Of their breed it would be difficult to speak at this distance of time ; but it is conjectured that they resembled the large broken-haired harriers now to be met with in the mountainous parts of Wales, which, on good scenting days, are nearly a match for anything by their perseverance and nose. Slow and gradual must have been the transition to the present elaborate system ; but let us wave the minutiae of sporting antiquarianship.¹

In no one instance has the modern varied from the ancient system of hunting more than in the hour of meeting in the morning. With our forefathers, when the roost cock sounded his clarion, they sounded their horn ; throwing off the pack so soon as they could distinguish a stile from a gate, or, in other words, so soon as they could see to ride to the hounds. Then it was that the hare was hunted to her form by the trail, and the fox to his kennel by the drag.

¹ In a letter, dated February 1833, from the late Lord Arundel to the author of these papers, is the following interesting passage to sportsmen :—
‘ A pack of foxhounds were kept by my ancestor, Lord Arundel, between the years 1690 and 1700 ; and I have memoranda to prove that they occasionally hunted from Wardover Castle, in Wiltshire, and at Brimmer, in Hants, now Sir Edward Halse’s, but then the occasional residence of Lord Arundel. These hounds were kept by my family until *about* the year 1745, when the sixth Lord Arundel died, when they were kept by his nephew, the Earl of Castle-Haven, until the death of the last Earl of that name, about the year 1782. The pack were then sold to the celebrated Hugo Meynell, Esq., of Quorndon Hall, Leicestershire ; and hence it is possible they may have, in part, contributed to the establishment of that gentleman’s fox-hunting fame.’

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Slow as this system would now be deemed, it was a grand treat to the real sportsman. What, in the language of the chace, is called ‘the tender-nosed hound’ had an opportunity of displaying himself to the inexpressible delight of his master ; and to the field—that is, to the sportsmen who joined in the diversion—the pleasures of the day were enhanced by the moments of anticipation produced by the drag. As the scent grew warmer, the certainty of finding was confirmed ; the music of the pack increased ; and, the game being up, away went the hounds ‘in a crash.’ Both trail and drag are at present but little thought of ; hounds merely draw over ground most likely to hold the game they are in quest of, and thus, in a great measure, rely upon chance for coming across it ; for if a challenge be heard, it can only be inferred that a fox has been on foot in the night—the scent being seldom sufficient to enable the hound to carry it up to his kennel. Advantages, however, as far as sport is concerned, attend the present hour of meeting in the field. Independently of the misery of riding many miles in the dark, which sportsmen of the early part of the last century were obliged to do, the game, when it is now aroused, is in a better state to encounter the great speed of modern hounds, having had time to digest the food which it has partaken of in the night, previously to its being stirred. But it is only since the great increase of hares and foxes that the aid of the trail and drag could be dispensed with, without the frequent recurrence of blank days, which now seldom happen.

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Compared with the luxurious ease with which the modern sportsman is conveyed to the field—either lolling in his chaise - and - four or galloping along at the rate of twenty miles an hour on a hundred-guinea hack—the situation of his predecessor was all but distressing. In proportion to the distance he had to ride by starlight were his hours of rest broken in upon ; and, exclusive of the time which that operation might consume, another serious one was to be provided for—this was, the filling his hair with powder and pomatum until it could hold no more, and forming it into a well-turned knot, or club, as it was called, by his valet, which cost commonly a good hour's work. The protecting mud-boot, the cantering hack, the second horse in the field, were luxuries unknown to him ; and his well-soiled buckskins and brown-topped boots would have cut an indifferent figure in the presence of a modern connoisseur by a Leicestershire cover-side. Notwithstanding all this, however, we are inclined strongly to suspect that, out of a given number of gentlemen taking the field with hounds, the proportion of really scientific sportsmen may have been in favour of the olden times.

In the horse called *the hunter* a still greater change has taken place. The half-bred horse of the early part of the last century was, when highly broken to his work, a delightful animal to ride ; in many respects more accomplished, as a hunter, than the generality of those of the present day. When in his best form, he was a truly-shaped and powerful animal, possessing prodigious strength,

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with a fine commanding frame, considerable length of neck, a slight curve in his crest, which was always high and firm, and the head beautifully put on. Possessing these advantages, in addition to the very great pains taken with his mouth in the bitting, and an excellent education in the school or at the bar, he was what is termed a complete snaffle-bridle horse, and a standing as well as a flying leaper. Held well in hand—his rider standing up in the stirrups, holding him fast by the head, making the best of, and being able, from the comparatively slow rate at which hounds then travelled, to pick or choose his ground—such a horse would continue a chace of some hours’ duration at the pace he was called upon to go, taking his fences well and safely to the last ; and he would frequently command the then large sum of one hundred guineas. But all these accomplishments would never have enabled a horse of this description to carry the modern sportsman, who rides well up to hounds, on a good scenting day, over one of our best hunting countries. His strength would be exhausted before he had gone ten minutes, by the increased pace at which he would now be called upon to travel, but to which his breeding would be quite unequal ; and his true symmetry, his perfect fencing, his fine mouth, and all his other *points*, would prove of very little avail. If ridden close to the hounds, he would be powerless and dangerous before he had gone across half a dozen Leicestershire enclosures.

The increased pace of hounds, and that of the horses

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that follow them, have an intimate connection with each other, if not with the march of intellect. Were not the hounds of our day to go so fast as they do, they would not be able to keep clear of the crowd of riders who are now mounted on horses nearly equal to the racing pace. On the other hand, as the speed of hounds has so much increased, unless their followers ride speedy, and, for the most part, thorough-bred horses, they cannot see out a run of any continuance if the scent lies well. True it is that, at the present time, every Leicestershire hunter is not thorough-bred ; but what is termed the cock-tail, or half-bred horse of this day, is a very different animal from that of a hundred years back. In those days a cross between the thorough-bred, or perhaps *not quite thorough-bred*, horse and the common draught-mare was considered good enough to produce hunters equal to the speed of the hounds then used. There was not such an abundance of what may be termed the intermediate variety of the horse in the country—‘ pretty well-bred on each side the head ’—which has of late years been in demand for the fast coaches of England, in which low-bred horses have no chance to live. Mares of *this* variety, put to thorough-bred stallions, *and their produce crossed with pure blood*, create the sort of animal that comes *now* under the denomination of the half-bred English hunter, or cock-tail. These are also the horses which contend for our several valuable stakes, made for horses not thorough-bred, though, when brought to the post, they are sometimes so much like race-horses in their appearance

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and their pace, that it would be difficult to detect the blot in their pedigree. A prejudice long existed against thorough-bred horses for the field, particularly such as had once been trained to the course ; and in some quarters it still lingers. It is argued by their opponents that the thinness of their skins makes them afraid of rough blackthorn fences, and that they lose their speed in soft, or what, in sporting language, is termed deep ground ; also, that having been accustomed from their infancy to the jockey’s hand, they lean upon their bits, as when in a race, and are therefore unpleasant to ride. Such of them as have been long in training may undoubtedly be subject to these objections, and never become good and pleasant hunters ; but when purchased young, and possessing strength and bone, they must have many counterbalancing advantages over the inferior-bred horse. So far from not making good leapers, the firmness of bone and muscle peculiar to this variety of the breed is prodigiously in favour of that desirable qualification. Indeed, it has been truly said of them, that they can often leap large fences when lower-bred horses cannot leap smaller ones—the result of their superior wind when put to a quick pace.

Whoever wishes to see two distinct species of the horse in the most perfect state, should go to Newmarket and Melton Mowbray—to the former for the race-horse, to the latter for the hunter. In no place upon the earth is *condition* attended to with so much care, or managed with such skill, as in this renowned metropolis of the fox-hunting

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world. Indeed, we conceive it would be useless to expect horses to live with hounds in such a country as Leicestershire, unless they were in condition to enable them to contend for a plate.

Melton Mowbray generally contains from two to three hundred hunters in the hands of the most experienced grooms England can produce—the average number being ten to each sportsman residing there, although some of those who ride heavy, and rejoice in long purses, have from fourteen to twenty for their own use ; the stud of the Earl of Plymouth for many years exceeded the last-mentioned number. It may seem strange, that one man should, under any circumstances, need so large a number of horses solely for his personal use in the field ; and it must be admitted that few countries do require it. In Leicestershire, however, the universal practice is for each sportsman to have at least two hunters in the field on the same day—a practice found to be economical, as it is from exhaustion, the effect of long-continued severe work, that the health of horses is most injured. And when it is also borne in mind that hounds are to be reached from Melton, Leicester, etc., every day in the week—that one horse out of six in every man's stud is, upon an average, lame, or otherwise unfit for work—and that a horse should always have five days' rest after a moderate, and at least seven or eight after a severe, run with hounds—it will not seem surprising that ten or twelve hunters should be deemed an indispensable stud for a regular Leicestershire sportsman.

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The stables and other conveniences for hunters in the town and neighbourhood are upon a very superior scale, and the greater part of the studs remain there all the year round ; though, from the comparatively small quantity of arable land in the county of Leicester, and the very great demand for forage, oats and hay are always considerably dearer here than at any other place in England. The sum-total of expenses attending a stud of twelve hunters at Melton, including every outgoing, is, as nearly as can be estimated, one thousand pounds per annum. In all stables, the average outlay for the purchase of horses is great,—at least two hundred guineas each hunter ; and, in some, the annual amount of wear and tear of horse-flesh is considerable.

At no distant date—within at most thirty years—Melton Mowbray was an insignificant-looking little town. It is prettily situated in a rich vale, through which the river Stoure passes, but had nothing an artist would have called a *feature* about it, except its beautiful church. But of late it has put on a very different appearance owing to the numbers of comfortable houses which have been erected for the accommodation of its sporting visitors, who now spend not less, on an average, than fifty thousand pounds per annum on the spot. It stands on one of the great north roads, eighteen miles from Nottingham, and fifteen from Leicester ; which latter place is also become a favourite resort of sportsmen, as it is well situated for the best part of the Quorn, and Lord Lonsdale’s countries, and many

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of the favourite covers of the Atherstone (lately better known as Lord Anson's) country, can be reached from it.

The following description of the Old Club at Melton Mowbray, so called in contradistinction to the New Club, some time since broken up, is given in one of 'Nimrod's' letters in the '*Old Sporting Magazine*,' about ten years back:—

' The grand feature at Melton Mowbray is the Old Club, which has been established about thirty-eight years, and owes its birth to the following circumstances:—Those distinguished sportsmen, the late Lord Forester and Lord Delamere (then Messrs. Forester and Cholmondeley), had been living for some years at Loughborough for the purpose of hunting with Mr. Meynell, and removed thence into Melton, where they took a house, and were joined by the late Mr. Smythe Owen, of Conover Hall, Shropshire. As this house, now known as the Old Club House, only contains four best bedrooms, its members are restricted to that number. But the following sportsmen have, at different periods, belonged to the club:—The Hon. George Germaine; Lords Alvanley and Brudenel; the Hon. Joshua Vanneck, now Lord Huntingfield; the Hon. Berkeley Craven; the late Sir Robert Leighton; the late Mr. Meyler; Messrs. Brommell, Vansittart, Thomas Assheton Smith, Lindow, Langston, Maxse, Maher, Moore, Sir James Musgrave, and the present Lord Forester—the four last-named gentlemen forming the present club. There is something highly respectable in everything connected with the Melton Old Club. Not only is some of the best society in England to be met with in their circle, but the members have been remarkable for living together on terms of the strictest harmony and friendship; and a sort of veneration has been paid by them to the recollection of the former members, as the following anecdotes will prove:—The same plate is now in use which was purchased when the club was established (for there are none of the *certamina divitiarum*—no ostentatious displays at the table of the Old Club, though everything is as good, of its kind,

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as a first-rate cook can produce, and the wines are of the best quality), and even trifles are regarded with a scrupulous observance. A small print of the late Samuel Chiffney, on “Baronet,”¹ was placed against the wall by the Hon. George Germaine, so distinguished as a most excellent sportsman, as well as a rider over a country or a race-course—in the latter accomplishment perhaps scarcely excelled by any gentleman jockey; and although, since it was first affixed, the room has undergone more than one papering and repairing, yet the same print, in the same frame, and *on the same nail*, still hangs in the same place.

“The rivets were not found that joined us first,
That do not reach us yet;—we were so mixed,
We were one mass, we could not give or take
But from the same, for he was I—I he.”

There have lately sprung up two junior clubs at Melton. The one called the New Club, occupying the house formerly the residence of Lord Alvanley, opposite that excellent inn called the George Hotel, is composed of the following eminent sportsmen:—Mr. Errington, the master of the hounds; Count Matuchevitch, Mr. Massey Stanley, and Mr. Lyne Stevens. The other, at the house of the late Sir Harry Goodricke, is known as ‘Lord Rokeby’s Club,’ and consists of Lords Rokeby and Eglinton, Sir Frederick Johnson, and Mr. Little Gilmour. The uninitiated reader would, perhaps, be surprised by an enumeration of the persons of rank, wealth, and fashion, who, during months of every year, resign the comforts and elegancies of their family mansions for a small house in some town or village of Leicestershire—to the eye of any one but a sportsman,

¹ Baronet was a celebrated racer, belonging to George the Fourth when Prince of Wales.

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nearly the ugliest county in England. Amongst these devotees to fox-hunting are the following:—The Earl of Wilton and his countess, in the town of Melton, at the house formerly occupied by the Earl of Darlington, to which he had greatly added, having purchased it: it is, perhaps, the most complete and splendid hunting-box at this time in England. At Little Poulton the Earl of Darlington and family; at Leicester, Sir John Key and his lady; at Sowerby, Mr. and Mrs. John Villiers; at Quorndon, Mr. Farnham; and at the Hall, late Mr. Meynell's, Mr. Angerstein; at Ratcliffe, Captain Oliver and his lady; at Oakham, Mr. Curwin; at Lowesby, the Marquis of Waterford; at Barleythorpe, Mr. Bevan; at North Stoke, Mr. Turner; at the Lodge, near to Melton, the residence of the late Earl of Plymouth, are domiciled, in the season, Sir David and Lady Anne Baird; and nearer the town, the following well-known sportsmen:—Mr. John Ewart, with his family, in the house formerly Lord Kinnaird's; Count Bathyany, *per se*; and in various hotels and lodgings are to be found, Lords Archibald Seymour, Macdonald, and Howth; Messrs. White, Spiers, Wharton, Rochford, Harvey Aston, Doyne, William Coke, John Campbell (of Saddel), Charles Lambe, etc.

Nor can any foreigner visiting this country, and a sportsman in his own, fail to be greatly surprised at the magnificence of our hunting establishments, whose sole object is the fox. The kennels and stables at Quorndon Hall, celebrated as the residence of ‘the great Mr. Meynell,’ and

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subsequently, until within the last few years, of every proprietor of the Quorndon or Quorn hounds, are especially worthy his attention. The former are perhaps the most extensive at the present day in England ; among the latter is one holding twenty-eight horses, so arranged, that when a spectator stands in the centre of it, his eye commands each individual animal ; and being furnished with seats, and lighted by powerful lamps, forms a high treat to the eye of a sportsman on a winter’s evening ; in addition to this, there are several loose boxes and an exercise ride, as it is called, under cover, for bad weather. The usual amount of the Quorn establishment has been forty efficient hunters, and from sixty to one hundred couple of hounds. Mr. Osbaldeston, however, during his occupation of the country, had a still larger kennel—and no wonder, for it was his custom to turn out every day in the week, weather permitting ; and, after Christmas, as the days increased in length, he had often two packs out on the same day—a circumstance before unheard of. This gentleman, however, is insatiable in his passion for the chace ; and when we think what fatigue he must have been inured to whilst hunting his own hounds six days a week, in such a county as Leicestershire, for a succession of seasons, we read with less surprise his late Herculean feat of riding fifty four-mile heats over Newmarket Heath, in the short space of eight hours, and in the face of most tempestuous weather !

Four packs of foxhounds divide this far-famed county of Leicester : namely, Mr. Forester’s, late the Duke of

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Rutland's ; the Earl of Lonsdale's ; the Atherstone, late the Earl of Lichfield's, afterwards Sir John Gerard's, but now Mr. Applewaite's ; and what were so long called the Quorn, now Mr. Errington's, but lately Sir Harry Goodricke's, who built a kennel for them at Thrussington, half-way between Melton and Leicester, which situation is more in the centre of the country than Quorn, where they had previously been kept for the period of Mr. Meynell's hunting. The county of Leicester, however, does not of itself find room for all these packs : parts of Rutlandshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and Warwickshire, are also included in their beat.

Our readers are doubtless aware that such portion of a country as is hunted by any one pack of hounds is technically called their *country* ; and of all the *countries* in the world, the Quorn certainly bears the bell. This superiority arises from the peculiar nature of the soil, which, being for the most part good, is highly favourable to scent ; the immense proportion of grazing land in comparison with that which is ploughed ; and the great size of the enclosures, many of which run to from sixty to one hundred acres each. The rarity of large woods in this part of Leicestershire is also a great recommendation to it as a hunting country ; while it abounds in furze-brakes, or gorse-covers, as they are termed, for the rent of which a considerable annual sum (nearly one thousand pounds) is paid to the owners. Independently of these, what are termed artificial covers are made with stakes, set at a certain height from the ground for the

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grass to grow over them ; but they are very inferior to the others, being difficult for hounds to draw. The subscription to the Quorn hounds has varied from two thousand to four thousand pounds per annum ;¹ but Sir Harry Goodricke bore the whole expense of them himself.

One of the most striking features in the aspect of the chosen regions of English fox-hunting is the formidable *ox-fence*, rendered necessary by the difficulty of keeping fatting cattle within their pastures, during the season of the oestrus, or gad-fly. It consists of—first, a wide ditch, then a sturdy blackthorn hedge, and at least two yards beyond that a strong rail, about four feet high ; to clear all these obstacles, from whichever side they may be approached, is evidently a great exertion for a horse. What is termed the bullfinch-fence (still more common in these districts) is a quickset hedge of perhaps fifty years’ growth, with a ditch on one side or the other, and so high and strong that horses cannot clear it. The sportsman, however, charging this at nearly full speed, succeeds in getting to the other side, when the bushes close after him and his horse, and there is no more appearance of their transit than if a bird had hopped through. Horses, unaccustomed to these fences, seldom face them well at first ; perhaps nothing short of the emulation which animates their riders, and the courage created in the noble animals themselves by the presence of the hounds, would induce them to face such

¹ Sir Bellingham Graham alone received the last-named sum. That now given to Mr. Errington is about two thousand five hundred pounds.

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things at all. Timber-fences, such as rails, stiles, and gates, but particularly rails, are oftener leaped in Leicestershire than in any other country, by reason of the great height which the quickset fences attain—a height which, in some places, nothing but a bird can surmount ; brooks also abound, amongst the widest of which are the Whissendine ; the Smite, or Belvoir ; one under Stanton Wood ; another under Norton by Galby ; and a fifth near Woodwell Head.

At the conclusion of the last century, Mr. Meynell was master of these Quorn hounds, since which time they have been in the hands of the following conspicuous sportsmen : Earl Sefton, the late Lord Foley, Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, Sir Bellingham Graham, Mr. Osbaldeston, Lord Southampton, the late Sir Harry Goodricke, Sir Francis Holyoake Goodricke, and Mr. Errington, the second son of Sir Thomas Stanley, Bart., of Cheshire, who now has them.

The town of Melton furnishes an interesting scene on each hunting morning. At rather an early hour are to be seen groups of hunters, the finest in the world, setting out in different directions to meet different packs of hounds. Each sportsman sends forward two. On one is mounted a very light but extremely well-dressed lad, who returns home on his master's cover hack, or in the dickey of his carriage, if he has happened to be carried to cover in the more luxurious fashion. On the other hunter is a personage of a very different description. This is what is called the 'second-horse man' ; he rides the second horse,



"THE SECOND HORSE."



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which is to carry his master with the hounds after his having had one, or part of one, chace on the first. This description of servant is by no means easy to procure ; and he generally exhibits in his countenance and demeanour something like a modest assurance that he possesses qualities of importance. In short, he must have some brains in his head ; be a good horseman, with a light hand ; be able to ride very well to hounds ; and, above all, he must have a good eye to, and a thorough knowledge of, a country, to enable him to give his master a chance of changing his horse in a run, and not merely when it is over. Lord Sefton brought this second-horse system into fashion at the time he hunted Leicestershire, when Jack Raven, a light-weight, and son of his huntsman, the celebrated John Raven, huntsman to the still more celebrated Mr. Meynell, used to ride one of his thousand-guinea hunters in his wake—if we may so express ourselves—in the field, to which he changed his seat at the first convenient opportunity. The system, however, has been improved upon since then. The second-horse man now rides to points, instead of following the hounds, and thus often meets his master at a most favourable moment, when his good steed is sinking, with one that has not been out of a trot. There is much humanity as well as comfort in this arrangement ; for at the pace hounds now go over grass countries, horses become somewhat distressed under heavy-weights in a short time after the chace begins, when the scent lies well, and they are manfully ridden up to the pack.

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About an hour and a half after the servants are gone forward with the hunters, a change of scene is to be observed at Melton. Carriages and four appear at some doors, at others very clever, and, most commonly, thorough-bred hacks, led gently in hand, ready for their owners to mount. The by-roads of this country being bad for wheels, the hack is often the better conveyance of the two—always, indeed, unless the fixture be at a place on, or not far from, a turnpike road ; and twelve or fourteen miles are generally performed by him within the hour.

The *style* of your Meltonian fox-hunter has long distinguished him above his brethren of what he calls the provincial chace. When turned out of the hands of his valet, he presents the very *beau-ideal* of his *caste*. The exact Stultz-like fit of his coat, his superlatively well-cleaned leather breeches and boots, and the generally apparent high breeding of the man, can seldom be matched elsewhere ; and the most cautious sceptic on such points would satisfy himself of this fact at one single inspection.

Before Leicestershire acquired its present ascendant rank in the scale of sport, it was hunted by what were called the Noel hounds, which afterwards became the property of the Lonsdale family ; but, in those early days, this county wore, to the eye of a sportsman, a very different appearance from that which it now presents. A great portion of the land was unenclosed ; neither was there a tenth part of the furze-covers with which it now abounds. The foxes, on the other hand, were wilder then than they are at present,

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and runs of longer duration than those of later times were, on an average, the result. Game was not so plentiful as it now is ; consequently foxes had further to travel for their usual provender, which trained them for runs of extraordinary length ; and they were wilder, from the wilder nature of the country in which they were bred. It was, however, reserved to Mr. Meynell to render famous the county of Leicester as a hunting country. He was, doubtless, the most successful sportsman of his own time, nor has he been surpassed by any who have trodden in his steps ; although it may be admitted he has had his equals in some departments of ‘the craft.’ It is a great mistake to fancy that a fool will ever make a first-rate figure even in fox-hunting ; and, in truth, this father of the modern chace was anything but a fool. He was a man of strong and vigorous mind, joined with much perseverance, as well as ardour in his favourite pursuit, and brought faculties to bear upon sport, as a *science*, which would have distinguished themselves in any walk of life to which he might have applied them. As a breeder of hounds he displayed a perfect judgment : the first qualities he looked for were fine noses and stout running ; a combination of strength with beauty, and steadiness with high mettle. His idea of perfection of shape was summed up in ‘short backs, open bosoms, straight legs, and compact feet.’ Although he did not hunt his hounds himself, yet he was one of the boldest, as well as most judicious horsemen of his time ; but this was only a minor qualification. His knowledge of hunt-

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ing was supreme, and several of his maxims are in force to the present hour. He was a great advocate for not hurrying hounds in their work ; and having, perhaps, unparalleled influence over his field, he was enabled to prevent his brother sportsmen from pressing on the hounds when in difficulties—himself being the first to keep aloof : in chace, no man rode harder.

It was in his day that the hard riding, or, we should rather say, quick riding, to hounds, which has ever since been practised, was first brought into vogue. The late Mr. Childe, of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire—a sportsman of the highest order, and a great personal friend of Mr. Meynell—is said to have first set the example, and it was quickly followed by the leading characters of the Quorn hunt.¹ This system has not only continued, but has gained ground ; and the art of riding a chace may be said to have arrived at a state of perfection quite unknown at any other period of time. That a drawback from sport, and occasional loss of foxes, are often the results of this dashing method of riding to hounds, every sportsman must acknowledge ; as an old

¹ Among the foremost of these were the present Earl of Jersey, then Lord Villiers ; the late Lord Forester, then Mr. Cecil Forester ; Lord Delamere, then Mr. Cholmondeley ; the Honourable George Germaine ; Earl Sefton ; Lord Huntingfield, then the Honourable Joshua Vanneck ; the late Lords Charles Somerset, Maynard, and Craven ; Lord Lyndoch, then Colonel Graham ; the late Lords Foley and Wenlock, then Sir Robert Lawley ; Honourables Robert Grosvenor, Berkeley Craven, and Martin Hawke ; Sir John Shelley, Sir Henry Peyton, and the late Sir Stephen Glynn ; General Tarleton ; Messrs. Loraine Smith, Childe, Charles Meynell, Harvey Aston, Lowth, Musters, Lambton, Bennet, Hawkes, Lockley, Thomas Assheton Smith, Lindow, Jacob Wardell, *cum multis aliis.*

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writer on hunting has observed, ‘ The emulation of leading, in dogs and their masters, has been the ruin of many a good cry.’ One circumstance, however, has greatly tended to perfect the system of riding well up, and this is the improved condition of hunters.¹ Of Mr. Meynell’s time, two celebrated chaces are recorded in print: one of an hour and twenty minutes without a check; and the other, two hours and fifty minutes without a cast. Only two horses carried their riders throughout the first run, and only one went to the end of the second; both foxes were killed, and *every hound* was present at the death of each. We may venture to say, had the two runs we have alluded to taken place within the last few years, this superiority in the condition of the hounds over the horses would by no means have been maintained.

We wish we could gratify such of our readers as are sportsmen with the date and origin of our best packs of foxhounds, as well as the names and character of their owners; but our limits will not allow us to go into much detail. Perhaps the oldest foxhound blood in England at this time is to be found in the kennel of the Earl of Lonsdale, at Cottesmore. The Noels, whom this family succeeded, were of ancient standing in the chace; and the

¹ The advantages of the new system of preparing the hunter for the field have been so clearly demonstrated by the author of these papers, in his *Letters on the Condition of Hunters, Riding to Hounds*, etc., that the old one, of turning him to grass in the summer, and destroying that condition which it had taken months to procure, is nearly, if not totally, exploded in the studs of all the hard riders of the present day.

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venerable peer himself has now superintended the pack for nearly fifty years, with a short interregnum of three or four years, when Sir Gilbert Heathcote had them.

Lord Yarborough's kennel can likewise boast of very old blood, that pack having descended, without interruption, from father to son for upwards of one hundred and fifty years.

The hounds, late Mr. Warde's, sold to Mr. Horlock a few years since for two thousand guineas, claim a high descent, having much of the blood of Lord Thanet's and Mr. Elwes's packs, which were in the possession of the Abingdon family at Rycot, for at least three generations, and hunted Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

Mr. Warde was a master of foxhounds during, as we believe, the yet unequalled period of fifty-seven years in succession. During this time he sold his pack to Lord Spencer; but reserved three couple of bitches, from which he raised another pack, and thus never lost sight of his old blood.

The late Earl Fitzwilliam comes very near Mr. Warde as an old master of foxhounds. Soon after Mr. Warde purchased his first pack of the Honourable Captain Bertie, this peer bought the one called the Crewe and Foley, which had been very long established in Oxfordshire and Warwickshire; and he kept them to his death—nearly fifty years, and they are now in the kennel of the present Earl.

The Belvoir hounds are also a very old-established pack, but had an interval during the minority of the present

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Duke of Rutland, when in the hands, first, of Sir Carnaby Haggerstone, and afterwards of Mr. Percival, brother of the late Lord Egmont.

The Duke of Beaufort’s are another justly celebrated pack, now in possession of the third generation ; they date from the time of Lord Fitzwilliam’s taking the Crewe and Foley hounds, which made an opening in that part of Oxfordshire which the Duke now hunts.

Foxhounds have been kept at Raby Castle, Durham, by the present Duke of Cleveland and his uncle, the late Duke, for more than a century ; and His Grace officiated as huntsman to his pack for nearly forty seasons, still following them to the field.

The Earl of Scarborough’s late pack, now Mr. Foljambe’s, hunting the Collingworth country, claims also an early date ; and among the other old masters of foxhounds now alive, the names of Sir Richard Puleston, the late Lord Middleton, the Earl of Harewood, Mr. Villebois, Mr. Ralph Lambton, Mr. Musters, and the Duke of Grafton, stand next on the list. The late Sir Thomas Mostyn was in the uninterrupted possession of foxhounds for upwards of forty years ; the late Mr. Chute, of Hampshire, kept them at least thirty years ; and that super-excellent sportsman, Mr. Musters, has already seen out a similar period.

With the exception of those and a few others, the packs of English foxhounds have changed masters so often within the last fifty years, that it is almost impossible to trace them,

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either in blood or possession. However, the most valuable kennels of the present day are those of the Dukes of Rutland, Beaufort, and Cleveland, Lord Fitzwilliam, Messrs. Ralph Lambton and Osbaldeston (now Mr. Harvey Combe's). Mr. Warde has been remarkable for the great bone, size, and power of the hounds he has bred. With the exception of the Duke of Cleveland's and Mr. Villebois's *large* packs (so called in contradistinction to packs consisting of their smaller hounds, which these eminent sportsmen bring into the field on the alternate days), no hounds of the present day equal his in this respect. His logic on the subject is incontrovertible. 'You may at pleasure,' says this distinguished sportsman, 'diminish the size and power of the animal you wish to breed; but it is difficult to increase, or even preserve them, adhering to the same breed.' Many thought that Mr. Warde's hounds looked to some disadvantage, owing to their generally carrying a good deal of flesh, which, however, he considered—as did also the celebrated Tom Rose, the Duke of Grafton's late huntsman, and father of the present—absolutely essential to those which, like his, hunted strong woodland countries. To the eye of a sportsman, it is certain they always afforded a high treat, as the power and fine symmetry of the foxhound were apparent at first sight; and almost every kennel in the south of England, and several in the north, are now proud to acknowledge their obligations to the blood of John Warde—*the Father of the Field.*

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The following sketch of honest Old Tom is copied from a late number of the *Northampton Herald*, with a few additional particulars by the friend who has kindly forwarded it to us, and who had long known him, and was able to appreciate his character. It is but an imperfect sketch, he observes, and hardly does Old Tom justice :—

‘ Poor Tom has at length gone to the place where all things are forgotten. For many years have I known him well, and safely can I aver that a more honest and worthy man never sat on a saddle, or ever cheered a hound. He had been from his infancy in the family of the Duke of Grafton. It is related of him, that Joe Smith, who had the care of the old Duke’s hounds, whilst hunting one day at Staen, near Brackley, heard a boy hallooing crows, and was so pleased with his voice, that he took him into the stable. Be that as it may, he hunted the Grafton pack for nearly half a century. As it is much easier to pick a hole than mend one, so many, who were unacquainted with the nature of the country, used oftentimes to be not very scrupulous in their remarks as to his management. No one knew what hounds ought to be better than Tom ; but as he frequently used to say, “ a man must breed his pack to suit his country.” His hounds were supposed to be wild, and to have too much fly in them ; or, according to his phrase, “ a leetle in a hurry.” They certainly were so in a degree ; but, in the ungovernable woodlands he had to hunt, how many foxes would he have caught had he not lifted them and thrown them in at head, with a bad fox ? One fox would have lasted him a season. This system, doubtless, would make them wild in the open, but in a woodland country what other system is to be pursued ? Knowing that they had a good deal of fling in them, Tom could not bear the sight of a red coat. The Pytchley wild-boys, who were ever for a scurry in the morning, used to indulge Tom with their company whenever they met in the open, and not being accustomed (when at home) to give them “ much room,” used to drive them over it most un-

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mercifully, and generally soon lost their first fox for them. As soon, however, as Tom's company had left him, or he had left them, by slipping down-wind with a few farmers and a field he could control, no hounds would sooner settle to their scent, or make more of it. If the scent would let them, none could twist him up sooner. Tom had one failing (and who has not ?), which was, that he was too strongly prejudiced in favour of his own sort, and thereby lost the advantage which is derived from judiciously crossing, and which has so mainly contributed to the improvement of hounds in the present day. He had generally many lame hounds, which arose, not from any fault of his, but from the dampness of the kennel, in which there arose upright springs ; which (whatever may be the case now) were not cured in his time. Though not an elegant, he was a capital horseman, and no one got better to his hounds. He did not like either a difficult or a raw horse, and he was not what is called a bruising rider ; but he well knew the pace his horse was going, and always kept something in him. He did not like cramming him at large fences ; but, like his inimitable pupil, Charles King, would always let any aspiring rider break the binders for him, and would rather get his horse's hind-legs into the middle of a fence and make him creep through it, than let him jump.

‘ He had a sharp eye for a gap, or the weakest place in a fence, and could bore a hole through a black, dark double hedge better than most men. In the latter part of his life, he had a propensity highly disagreeable to a horseman’s eye : he used to poke his horse on the head till he frightened him out of his senses, held him too hard, and frequently made him jump short, either before or behind. The consequence was, he often spoilt his beauty in a scramble, or lay on his back, as the penalty of his cowardice. However, he got well to his hounds without upsetting his horse ; and when he was with them he knew well when to stir them, and when to let them alone.

‘ Some five-and-thirty years ago no pack was better appointed. The horses came chiefly from the racing stud, and all the men were

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well mounted. Dick Forster¹ and Ned Allen, then both in high feather, were of the first order of the profession (*Jackett*, too, was a famous assistant, and a fine rider), quick, active, and light, and always ready to play into one another’s hands. As many a flower blows unseen, so had these hounds many a fine day’s sport that was hardly ever heard of. With no one out but “*Old Beau*” with his low-crowned hat, black top-boots, one steel spur; his groom, Luke, in his twilled fustian frock, on the second horse; and a few old potterers like myself—I have seen many a run, the recollection of which warms the expiring embers of my old age. Tom had a fine voice, which he, however, never used unnecessarily; and he scarcely ever blew his horn, except to get them out of a cover when the fox was away. As long as fox-hunting is followed by Englishmen, so long will the name of Old Tom Rose be cherished with the fondest recollections.’

Sir Richard Puleston is celebrated as a judicious breeder of hounds, and his blood has likewise been highly valued in several of our best kennels, amongst which is the Duke of Cleveland’s, to whom Sir Richard sold a very large draft some years since, and also that of the Fife. The late Mr. Corbet, a very considerable breeder of hounds, always bowed to his superior judgment in this department of the science. The most celebrated *breeders*, however, of this day, are the Dukes of Rutland and Beaufort, and Mr. Ralph Lambton; and Mr. Osbaldeston’s blood, although himself no longer the owner of hounds, is *de facto* in the highest repute in the hunting world. A few years back, he had nearly forty couple of hounds at work at one time, by one sire—his Furrier.

The following testimony to the character of the late

¹ Now huntsman to Mr. Villebois, in Hampshire.

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Duke of Beaufort and his foxhounds, appeared in a late number of the '*New Sporting Magazine*,' from the pen of 'Nimrod' :—

' Yet it is as a master of foxhounds, that it is within my province to speak of the late Duke of Beaufort ; and, from the many years' experience I had of His Grace in the field, I feel myself in some measure competent to the task. I need scarcely say I was always an admirer of his hounds, although I could not like his country. The gradual improvement I saw in the former, in defiance of all the disadvantages of the latter, convinced me that there was a system at work highly worthy of my consideration—a directing hand *somewhere* which must eventually lead to perfection. But whence this directing hand I was for a long time unable to discover. I doubted it being that of the Duke, not from a mistrust of his capacity, but because I had reason to believe the numerous avocations of his station prevented his attending to the minutiae of a kennel ; although I did not consider His Grace a sportsman of the very first class, in which his hounds certainly stood. I doubted it being that of Philip Payne, his huntsman, for, to appearance, a duller bit of clay was never moulded by Nature. But we should not judge from appearances, and I lived to confess my error. There was about Philip a steady observance of *circumstances*, which, increasing with the experience of their results, was more useful to him, as a breeder of foxhounds, than the learning and talent of a Porson. His observation alone taught him that in seeking to produce excellence in animals, we have the best prospect of success in the election of those to breed from which have individually exhibited the peculiar qualities we require from them. Having availed ourselves of those in a kennel, a combination of strength and symmetry—which we call beauty—produces the perfect hound ; at least as nearly so as the somewhat imperfect law of nature will allow of.'

Persons, who are not sportsmen, may be at a loss to estimate the annual expenses of a pack of foxhounds, hunting

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our first-rate countries ; and, perhaps, equally so to account for such large sums being expended in such pursuits.¹

Hay and oats, and, consequently, oatmeal, being very much cheaper now than they were during the war-prices, of course these expenses are diminished : but, even at present, we understand that, in the best establishments, very little is left out of four thousand pounds at the end of the year, when all contingent charges are liquidated ; and we have reason to know that several greatly outstrip even this sum, perhaps to the extent of one-half in addition. The late Sir Harry Goodricke had eighty couple of hounds in his kennel and forty-four hunters in his stables ; and we

¹ The following are the items of expenses laid down by Colonel Cooke in his ‘*Observations on Fox-Hunting*,’ published a few years since. The calculation supposed a four-times-a-week country ; but it is generally below the mark :—

Fourteen horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	£700
Hounds’ food for fifty couple	.	.	.	.	.	.	275
Firing	.	.	.	.	.	.	50
Taxes	.	.	.	.	.	.	120
Two whippers-in and feeder	.	.	.	.	.	.	210
Earth-stopping	.	.	.	.	.	.	80
Saddlery	.	.	.	.	.	.	100
Farriery, shoeing, and medicine	.	.	.	.	.	.	100
Young hounds purchased, and expenses at walks	.	.	.	.	.	.	100
Casualties	.	.	.	.	.	.	200
Huntsman’s wages and his horses	.	.	.	.	.	.	300
							<hr/>
							£2235

Of course, countries vary much in expense from local circumstances such as the necessity for change of kennels, hounds sleeping out, etc., etc. In those which are called hollow countries, consequently abounding in earths, the expense of earth-stopping is heavy ; and Northamptonshire is of this class. In others, a great part of the foxes are what is termed stub-bred (bred above ground), which circumstance reduces the amount of this item.

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believe that his predecessors, Lord Southampton, Mr. Osbaldeston, and Sir Bellingham Graham, even exceeded this measure of establishment.

The price of hounds is, perhaps, not generally known. Thirty years ago Sir Richard Puleston sold his to the Duke of Bedford for seven hundred, and fifteen years since, Mr. Corbet's were sold to Lord Middleton for twelve hundred guineas. A well-known good pack will, in these times, command a thousand guineas—those of Lord Tavistock (the Oakley) to Sir Harry Goodricke ; Mr. Nicholl's to the Earl of Kintore ; and Sir Richard Sutton's to Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, have been sold for that sum within the last few years ; and those of Mr. Warde, as we have already said, for double that sum. But a very few years back, indeed, Mr. Osbaldeston sold *ten couple* of hounds for the first-named sum to the late Lord Middleton ; and we have reason to believe that he had hounds in his kennel for which he would not have taken two hundred guineas a-piece. Knowing all this, one can make every allowance for the angry feeling and fears of their owners when they see the chance of their being ridden over and destroyed in chace. Good hounds are not easily replaced ; and it is on this account that in the hard-riding countries, and where the covers are small, seldom more than sixteen or seventeen couple form a pack.

The recent retirement of the Duke of Rutland from the field has been felt to leave a vacuum in the hunting world. Those hounds are now in the possession of a very popular

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young nobleman, Lord Forester, and His Grace subscribes one thousand two hundred pounds per annum towards their support ; but the Duke himself no longer hunts, neither is there the annual assemblage of sportsmen that was wont to be within the walls of Belvoir Castle. These are circumstances which have caused much regret ; for His Grace retires with the good name of all the fox-hunting population. He ‘ did the thing ’ with princely magnificence both indoors and out, and if materials had been sought for to furnish a faithful representation of the style and grandeur of the genuine English nobleman, giving a fair part of his attention to the arrangements of the chace, we have reason to believe they would have all been met with at Belvoir.

Although most foreigners express vast surprise that we should go to such expense in hunting the fox, unattended by the parade of the continental *chasse*, yet several of them have of late been induced to make their appearance in Leicestershire ; and some few have shown that had they been born Englishmen, and rightly initiated in the art, they must have been conspicuous characters in the field. The performances of Count Sandore, an Hungarian nobleman, who resided one year at Melton Mowbray, on a visit to Lord Alvanley, have already met the public eye ; and his daring horsemanship, and consequent mishaps, formed the subject of an amusing tale. From a ludicrous description given of them by himself, a series of pictures were painted by Mr. Ferneley, of Melton Mowbray, representing him in

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as extraordinary and perilous situations as the imagination of man could have conceived. Fiction, however, was not resorted to, every scene being a real one ; and the Count—the delight of the Meltonians—carried them to his own country, on his return, together with some English mares to produce hunters, having had a good taste of the breed. He was mounted by Mr. Tilbury, a celebrated horse-dealer in London, who found him a stud of eight horses for the season, for the moderate sum of one thousand pounds, including every contingent expense, even to the turnpike gates. Count Bathyany is a resident at Melton ; Counts Hahn and Bassewitz, from Germany, spent part of one season there ; and Count Matuchevitch, the Russian Minister, is residing there now. His Excellency has ten hunters of his own, rides hard, and is much esteemed by the Meltonians, and all sportsmen in the neighbourhood.¹ During the visit of Don Miguel to the Duke of Wellington at Strathfieldsay, a few years back, he went out with the Vine hounds (late Mr. Chute's), to which His Grace is a subscriber. He rode

¹ Several French sportsmen have lately visited Leicestershire ; the best performed of them, perhaps, is M. Normandie. M. de Vaublan and M. d'Hinnisdale have both had a taste of Melton ; and, in 1834, the last-named gentleman spent the winter at Leamington, in Warwickshire. This was the year in which M. Vaublan was in Leicestershire, where, although very indifferently mounted by Tilbury, and experiencing many falls, he was almost always to be seen at the finish of a good run. At all events, he went as long as his horse could go, and was considered a very good horseman. M. de Normandie has hunted much, both in Leicestershire, Warwickshire, and Dorsetshire, being at this time domiciled at Catesstock, in the latter county, the headquarters of Mr. Farquharson's hunt, with three thorough-bred young ones in his stud—namely, Ciudad, Rounival, and Rodrigo—which, no doubt, will soon become perfect in his hands, for no man need have better.

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a celebrated hunter of the late King’s, and gallantly did he put him along. It too often happens, however, on such occasions, when sport is most anxiously desired for the amusement of some distinguished individual, that the game runs short, or the scent lies faintly. Such was a good deal the case in this instance, although there was running enough to show that Miguel would have stopped at nothing that might have come in his way to oppose his being with the hounds. Of his qualities as a sportsman there was little opportunity of judging, but he certainly showed himself to be a horseman of a superior caste : insomuch that those who observed him were little astonished with the accounts of his personal activity in the first weeks after his return to Portugal : he, at that crisis, is said to have ridden six hundred miles in six successive days, a feat which those who have travelled on Portuguese roads will appreciate. So much for, we fear, one of the last persons to whom anybody would think of applying Wordsworth’s eulogium on ‘ the Shepherd Lord ’ :—

‘ In him the savage virtue of the chace,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts, were dead.’

It is a hackneyed enough remark, that both ancient and modern writers make sad work of it when they attempt a description of heaven. To describe a run with foxhounds is not a much easier task ; but to make the attempt with any other county than Leicestershire in our eye, would be giving a chance away. Let us then suppose ourselves to

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have been at Ashby Pasture, in the Quorn country, with Mr. Osbaldeston's hounds, in the year 1826, when that pack was at the height of its well-merited celebrity. Let us also indulge ourselves with a fine morning in the first week of February, and at least two hundred well-mounted men by the cover's side. Time being called—say a quarter past eleven, nearly our great-grandfather's dinner-hour—the hounds approach the furze-brake, or the gorse, as it is called in that region. '*Hark in, hark !*' with a slight cheer, and perhaps one wave of his cap, says Mr. Osbaldeston, who long hunted his own pack, and in an instant he has not a hound at his horse's heels. In a very short time the gorse appears shaken in various parts of the cover—apparently from an unknown cause, not a single hound being for some minutes visible. Presently one or two appear, leaping over some old furze which they cannot push through, and exhibit to the field their glossy skins and spotted sides. '*Oh ! you beauties !*' exclaims some old Meltonian, rapturously fond of the sport. Two minutes more elapse ; another hound slips out of cover, and takes a short turn outside with his nose to the ground and his stern lashing his side—thinking, no doubt, he might touch on a drag, should Reynard have been abroad in the night. Hounds have no business to *think, thinks* the second whipper-in, who observes him ; but one crack of his whip, with '*Rasselas, Rasselas, where are you going, Rasselas ? Get to cover, Rasselas !*' and Rasselas immediately disappears. Five minutes more pass away. '*No fox here,*' says one.

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‘Don’t be in a hurry,’ cried Mr. Craddock;¹ ‘they are drawing it beautifully, and there is rare lying in it.’ These words are scarcely uttered, when the cover shakes more than ever. Every stem appears alive, and it reminds us of a corn-field waving in the wind. In two minutes the sterns of some more hounds are seen ‘flourishing’² above the gorse. ‘*Have at him there*,’ holloas the Squire³—the gorse still more alive, and hounds leaping over each other’s backs. ‘*Have at him there again*,’ my good hounds; a fox for a hundred! reiterates the Squire; putting his finger in his ear, and uttering a scream which, not being set to music, we cannot give here. Jack Stevens (the first whipper-in) looks at his watch. At this moment ‘John White,’ ‘Val Maher,’ ‘Frank Holyoake’ (who will pardon us for giving them their *noms-de-chasse*),⁴ and two or three more of the fast ones, are seen creeping gently on towards a point at which they think it probable he may break. ‘Hold hard, there,’ says a sportsman; but he might as well speak to the wind. ‘Stand still, gentlemen! *pray* stand still,’ exclaims

¹ This gentleman resided within the limits of the Quorn hunt, and kindly superintended the management of the covers. He has lately paid the debt of nature.

² Technical, for the motion of a hound’s stern or tail, when he first feels a scent, but is not sufficiently confident to *own*, or *acknowledge* it.

³ When Mr. Osbaldeston had the Quorn hounds, three of the four packs which hunted in the same county with his own were the property of noblemen; so, for the sake of distinction, his friends conferred on him the familiar title of ‘the Squire.’

⁴ John White, Esq., of Park Hall, Derbyshire; Valentine Maher, Esq., a member of the Old Club; and Francis Lyttleton Holyoake, Esq., of Studley Castle, Worcestershire, but now Sir Francis Holyoake Goodricke, having succeeded to the title and estates of the late Sir Harry Goodricke.

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the huntsman ; he might as well say so to the sun. During the time we have been speaking of, all the field have been awake—gloves put on—cigars thrown away—the bridle-reins gathered well up into the hand, and hats pushed down upon the brow.

At this interesting period a Snob,¹ just arrived from a very rural country, and unknown to any one, but determined to witness the start, gets into a conspicuous situation. ‘Come away, sir !’ holloas the master (little suspecting that the Snob may be nothing less than one of the Quarterly Reviewers²) ; ‘what mischief are you doing there ? Do you think *you* can catch the fox ?’ A breathless silence ensues. At length a whimper is heard in the cover—like the voice of a dog in a dream : it is Flourisher,³ and the Squire cheers him to the echo. In an instant a hound challenges—and another—and another. ‘Tis enough. ‘*Tallyho !*’ cries a countryman in a tree. ‘He’s gone,’ exclaims Lord Alvanley : and, clapping his spurs to his horse, in an instant is in the front rank.

As all good sportsmen would say, ‘ ‘Ware hounds !’ cries Sir Harry Goodricke. ‘ Give them time,’ exclaims Mr. John Moore. ‘ That’s right,’ says Mr. Osbaldeston, ‘ spoil your own sport as usual.’ ‘ *Go along,*’ roars out

¹ We know nothing of the derivation of the word ‘ Snob,’ unless it be in contradistinction to *Nob* ; it is certainly not a classical one, but either that or *Tiger* is too often applied to a total stranger who ventures to show himself in the ‘swell countries’ as they are called.

² This essay originally appeared in the ‘*Quarterly Review*.’

³ A noted finder, now in Mr. Osbaldeston’s pack.

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Mr. Holyoake, ‘there are three couple of hounds on the scent.’ ‘That’s your sort,’ says Billy Coke,¹ coming up at the rate of thirty miles an hour on Advance, with a label pinned on his back, ‘*he kicks*’ ; ‘the rest are all coming, and there’s a rare scent to-day, I’m sure.’ Bonaparte’s Old Guard, in its best days, would not have stopped such men as these, so long as life remained in them.

Only those who have witnessed it can know in what an extraordinary manner hounds that are left behind in a cover make their way through a crowd, and get up to the leading ones of the pack, which have been fortunate in getting away with their fox. It is true they possess the speed of a race-horse ; still, nothing short of their high mettle could induce them to thread their way through a body of horsemen going the best pace, with the prospect of being ridden over and maimed at every stride they take. But, as Beckford observes, ‘ ‘Tis the dash of the foxhound which distinguishes him.’ A turn, however, in their favour, or a momentary loss of scent in the few hounds that have shot ahead—an occurrence to be looked for on such occasions—joins head and tail together, and the scent being good, every hound settles to his fox ; the pace gradually improves ; *vires acquirit eundo* ; *a terrible burst is the result !*

At the end of nineteen minutes the hounds come to a fault, and for a moment the fox has a chance—in fact, they

¹ Nephew to Mr. Coke of Holkham ; his famous horse Advance was dangerous in a crowd, and hence the necessity of a label.

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have been pressed upon by the horses, and have rather overrun the scent. ‘What a pity !’ says one. ‘What a shame !’ cries another ; alluding, perhaps, to a young one, who would and could have gone faster. ‘You may thank yourselves for this,’ exclaims Osbaldeston, well up at the time, Ashton¹ looking fresh ; but only fourteen men of the two hundred are to be counted ; all the rest *coming*. At one blast of the horn, the hounds are back to the point at which the scent has failed, Jack Stevens being in his place to turn them. ‘*Yo doit ! Pastime*,’ says the Squire, as she feathers her stern down the hedge-row, looking more beautiful than ever. She speaks ! ‘Worth a thousand, by Jupiter !’ cries John White, looking over his left shoulder, as he sends both spurs into Buxton, delighted to see only four more of the field are up. Our Snob, however, is amongst them. He has ‘gone a good one,’ and his countenance is expressive of delight, as he urges his horse to his speed to get again into a front place.

The pencil of a painter is now wanting ; and unless the painter should be a sportsman, even his pencil would be worth little. What a country is before him !—what a panorama does it represent ! Not a field of less than forty—some a hundred—acres, and no more signs of the plough than in the wilds of Siberia. See the hounds in a body that might be covered by a damask table-cloth—every stern down, and every head up, for there is no need of stooping,

¹ Mr. Osbaldeston sold Ashton to Lord Plymouth for four hundred guineas, after having ridden him six seasons.

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the scent lying breast-high. But the crash!—the music!—how to describe these? Reader, there is no crash now, and not much music. It is the tinker that makes great noise over a little work; but at the pace these hounds are going there is no time for babbling. Perchance one hound in five may throw his tongue as he goes, to inform his comrades, as it were, that the villain is on before them, and most musically do the light notes of Vocal and Venus fall on the ear of those who may be within reach to catch them. But who is so fortunate in this second burst, nearly as terrible as the first? Our fancy supplies us again, and we think we could name them all. If we look to the left, nearly abreast of the pack, we see six men going gallantly, and quite as straight as the hounds themselves are going, and on the right are four more, riding equally well, though the former have rather the best of it, owing to having had the inside of the hounds at the last two turns, which must be placed to the chapter of accidents. A short way in the rear, by no means too much so to enjoy this brilliant run, are the rest of the *élite* of the field, who had come up at the first check; and a few who, thanks to the goodness of their steeds, and their determination to be with the hounds, appear as if dropped from the clouds. Some, however, begin to show symptoms of distress. Two horses are seen loose in the distance—a report is flying about that one of the field is badly hurt, and something is heard of a collar-bone being broken, others say it is a leg; but the pace is *too good* to inquire. A cracking of rails is now heard, and

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one gentleman's horse is to be seen resting, nearly balanced, across one of them, his rider being on his back in the ditch, which is on the landing side. 'Who is he?' says Lord Brudenel to Jack Stevens. 'Can't tell, my lord; but I thought it was a queerish place when I came o'er it before him.' It is evidently a case of peril, but the pace is *too good* to afford help.

Up to this time 'Snob' has gone quite in the first flight; the 'Dons' begin to eye him, and, when an opportunity offers, the question is asked—'Who is that fellow on the little bay horse?' 'Don't know him,' says Mr. Little Gilmour (a fourteen-stone Scotchman, by-the-by), ganging gallantly to his hounds. 'He can ride,' exclaims Lord Rancliffe. 'A tip-top provincial, depend upon it,' added Lord Plymouth, going quite at his ease on a thorough-bred nag, three stone above his weight, and in perfect racing trim. Animal nature, however, will cry 'enough,' how good soever she may be, if unreasonable man press her beyond the point. The line of scent lies right athwart a large grass ground (as a field is termed in Leicestershire), somewhat on the ascent; abounding in ant-hills, or hillocks, peculiar to old grazing land, and thrown up by the plough some hundred years since, into rather high ridges, with deep, holding furrows between each. The fence at the top is impracticable—Meltonice, 'a stoper'; nothing for it but a gate, leading into a broad green lane, high and strong, with deep slippery ground on each side of it. 'Now for the timber-jumper,' cries Osbaldeston, pleased to find

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himself upon Ashton. ‘For Heaven’s sake, take care of my hounds, in case they may throw up in the lane.’ Snob is here in the best company, and that moment perhaps the happiest of his life ; but, not satisfied with his situation, wishing to out-Herod Herod, and to have a fine story to tell when he gets home, he pushes to his speed on ground on which all regular Leicestershire men are careful, and the death-warrant of the little bay horse is signed. It is true he gets first to the gate, and has no idea of opening it ; sees it contains five new and strong bars, that will neither bend nor break ; has a great idea of a fall, but no idea of refusing, presses his hat firmly on his head, and gets his whip-hand at liberty to give the good little nag a refresher ; but all at once he perceives it will not do. When attempting to collect him for the effort, he finds his mouth dead and his neck stiff ; fancies he hears something like a wheezing in his throat ; and discovering quite unexpectedly that the gate would open, wisely avoids a fall, which was *booked* had he attempted to leap it. He pulls up, then, at the gate ; and as he places the hook of his whip under the latch, John White goes over it close to the hinge-post, and Captain Ross, upon Clinker, follows him. The Reviewer then walks through.

The scene now shifts. On the other side of the lane is a fence of this description : it is a newly plashed hedge, abounding in strong growers, as they are called, and a yawning ditch on the other side ; but as is peculiar to Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, a considerable por-

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tion of the blackthorn, left uncut, leans outwards from the hedge, somewhat about breast-high. This large fence is taken by all now with the hounds—some to the right and some to the left of the direct line ; but the little bay horse would have no more of it. Snob puts him twice at it, and manfully too, but the wind is out of him, and he has no power to rise. Several scrambles, but only one fall, occur at this ‘rasper,’ all having nearly enough of the killing pace ; and a mile and a half further, the second horses are fallen in with, just in the nick of time. A short check from the stain of sheep makes everything comfortable, and the Squire having hit off his fox like a workman, thirteen men, out of two hundred, are fresh mounted and with the hounds, which settle to the scent again at a truly killing pace.

‘*Hold hard, Holyoake !*’ exclaims Mr. Osbaldeston (now mounted on Clasher), knowing what double-quick time he would be marching to, with fresh pipes to play upon and the crowd well shaken off ; ‘*pray don’t press ’em too hard, and we shall be sure to kill our fox.*¹ *Have at him there, Abigail and Fickle, good bitches !—see what a head they are carrying ! I ’ll bet a thousand they kill him.*’ The country appears better and better. ‘*He ’s taking a capital line,*’ exclaims Sir Harry Goodricke, as he points out to Sir James Musgrave two young Furrier hounds, who are particularly distinguishing themselves at the moment. ‘*Worth a dozen Reform Bills,*’ shouts Sir Francis Burdett, sitting erect upon

¹ One peculiar excellence in Mr. Osbaldeston’s hounds was their steadiness under pressure by the crowd.



90 ARMOUR

"THE LITTLE BAY HORSE WOULD HAVE NO MORE OF IT."

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Sampson,¹ and putting his head straight at a yawner. ‘We shall have the Whissendine brook,’ cries Mr. Maher, who knows every field in the country, ‘for he is making straight for Teigh.’ ‘And a bumper, too, after last night’s rain,’ holloas Captain Berkeley, determined to get first to four stiff rails in a corner. ‘So much the better,’ says Lord Alvanley, ‘I like a bumper at all times.’ ‘A fig for the Whissendine,’ cries Lord Gardner; ‘I am on the best water-jumper in my stable.’

The prophecy turns up. Having skirted Ranksborough Gorse, the villain has nowhere to stop short of Woodwell Head cover, which he is pointing for; and in ten minutes, or less, the brook appears in view. It is even with its banks, and as

‘Smooth glides the water where the brook is deep,’
its deepness was pretty certain to be fathomed.

‘*Yooi, OVER* he goes !’ holloas the Squire, as he perceives Joker and Jewell plunging into the stream, and Red-rose shaking herself on the opposite bank. Seven men, out of thirteen, take it in their stride; three stop short, their horses refusing the first time, but come well over the second; and three find themselves in the middle of it. The gallant ‘Frank Forester’ is among the latter; and having been requested that morning to wear a friend’s new red coat, to take off the gloss and glare of the shop, he accomplishes the task to perfection in the bluish-black mud of the Whis-

¹ A favourite hunter of the baronet’s which he once honoured by coming all the way from London to Melton to ride *one day* with hounds.

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sendine, only then subsiding after a three days' flood.¹ 'Who is that under his horse in the brook?' inquires that good sportsman and fine rider, Mr. Green, of Rolleston, whose noted old mare had just skimmed over the water like a swallow on a summer's evening. 'It's Middleton Biddulph,' says one. 'Pardon me,' cries Mr. Middleton Biddulph; 'Middleton Biddulph is here, *and here he means to be!*' 'Only Dick Christian,'² answers Lord Forester, 'and it's nothing new to him.' 'But he'll be drowned,' exclaims Lord Kinnaird. 'I shouldn't wonder,' observes Mr. William Coke. But the pace is *too good* to inquire.

The fox does his best to escape: he threads hedge-rows, tries the out-buildings of a farm-house, and once turns so short as nearly to run his foil, but—the perfection of the thing—the hounds turn shorter than he does, as much as to say—*die you shall*. The pace has been awful for the last twenty minutes. Three horses are blown to a standstill, and few are going at their ease. 'Out upon this great carcase of mine! no horse that was ever foaled can live under it at this pace, and over this country,' says one of the best welter-weights, as he stands over his four-hundred-guinea chestnut, then rising from the ground after giving him a heavy fall, his tail nearly erect in the air, his nostrils violently distended, and his eye almost fixed.³

¹ A true story.

² A celebrated rough-rider at Melton Mowbray, who greatly distinguished himself in the late grand steeplechase from Rolleston. He is paid fifteen shillings per day for riding gentlemen's young horses with hounds.

³ The writer here alluded to that celebrated sportsman, as well as horse-

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‘Not hurt, I hope,’ exclaims Mr. Maxse, to *somebody* whom he gets a glimpse of through the openings of a tall quickset-hedge which is between them, coming neck and crop into the adjoining field, from the top bar of a high, hog-backed stile. His eye might have been spared the unpleasing sight, had not his ear been attracted to a sort of *procumbit-humibos* sound of a horse falling to the ground on his back, the bone of his left hip indenting the greensward within two inches of his rider’s thigh. It is young Peyton,¹ who, having missed his second horse at the check, had been going nearly half the way in distress ; but from nerve and pluck, perhaps peculiar to Englishmen in the hunting-field, but very peculiar to himself, got within three fields of the end of this brilliant run. The fall was all but a certainty ; for it was the third stiff-timbered fence that had unfortunately opposed him, after his horse’s wind had been pumped out by the pace ; but he was too good to refuse them, and his horse knew better than to do so.

The *Aeneid* of Virgil ends with a death, and a chace is not complete without it. The fox dies within half a mile of Woodwell Head cover, evidently his point from the first, the pack pulling him down in the middle of a large grass field, every hound but one at his brush. Jack Stevens with

man, Mr. Thomas Edge of Nottinghamshire, who some years back refused, from the late Lord Middleton, the enormous sum of two thousand two hundred pounds for two of his horses, and on another occasion fifty pounds for the loan of one of them during the first run of the day from a certain cover, whether short or long.

¹ The only son of Sir Henry Peyton, Bart., one of the best and hardest riders of the present day.

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him in his hands would be a subject worthy of Edwin Landseer himself : a blackthorn, which has laid hold of his cheek, has besmeared his upper garments with blood, and one side of his head and cap are cased in mud, by a fall he has had in a lane, his horse having alighted in the ruts from a high flight of rails ; but he has ridden the same horse throughout the run, and has handled him so well he could have gone two miles further, if the chace had been continued so long. Osbaldeston's 'Who-hoop' might have been heard at Cottesmore, had the wind set in that direction, and every man present is ecstatic with delight. 'Quite the cream of the thing, I suppose,' says Lord Gardner, a very promising young one, at this time fresh in Leicestershire. 'The cream of everything in the shape of fox-hunting,' observes that excellent sportsman Sir James Musgrave, looking at that moment at his watch. 'Just ten miles, as the crow flies, in one hour and two minutes, with but two trifling checks, over the finest country in the world. What superb hounds are these ! ' added the baronet, as he turned his horse's head to the wind. ' You are right,' says Colonel Lowther, ' they are perfect. I wish my father had seen them do their work to-day.' Some of the field now come up, who could not live in the first flight ; but, as there is no jealousy here, they congratulate each other on the fine day's sport, and each man turns his head towards home.

A large party dine this evening at the Old Club, where, of course, this fine run is discussed, and the following accurate description of it is given by one of the oldest

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members, a true friend to fox-hunting, and to all mankind as well¹ : 'We found him,' said he, 'at Ashby Pasture, and got away with him, up wind, at a slapping pace over Burrow Hill, leaving Thorpe Trussells to the right, when a trifling check occurred. He then pointed for Ranksborough Gorse, which some feared and others hoped he might hang in a little, but he was too good to go near it. Leaving that on his right also, he crossed the brook to Whissendine, going within half a mile of the village, and then he had nothing for it but to fly. That magnificent country in the direction of Teigh was open to him, and he showed that he had the courage to face it. Leaving Teigh on the right, Woodwell Head was his point, and in two more fields he would have reached it. Thus we found him in the Quorn country ; ran him over the finest part of Lord Lonsdale's, and killed him on the borders of the Belvoir. Sir Bellingham Graham's hounds once gave us just such another tickler, from the same place, and in the same time, when the field were nearly as much beaten as they were to-day.'

But we have left Snob in the lane, who, after casting a longing eye towards his more fortunate companions, who were still keeping well in with the hounds, throws the rein over the neck of the good little bay horse, and, walking by his side, that he may recover his wind, inquires his way to Melton. Having no one to converse with, he thus soliloquises as he goes : ' What a dolt have I been, to spend five hundred a year on my stable, in any country than this ! But

¹ The writer here alluded to Mr. John Moore.

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stop a little ; how is it that *I*, weighing but eleven stone four pounds with my saddle, and upon my best horse, an acknowledged good one in my own country, could neither go so fast nor so long as that heavy fellow Maxse ; that still heavier Lord Alvanley ; and that monster Tom Edge, who, they tell me, weighs eighteen stone, at least, in the scales ? ’ At this moment a bridle-gate opens in the land, and a gentleman in scarlet appears, with his countenance pale and wan, and expressive of severe pain. It is he who had been dug out of the ditch in which Jack Stevens had left him, his horse having fallen upon him, after being suspended on the rail, and broken three of his ribs. Feeling extremely unwell, he is glad to meet with Snob, who is going his road—to Melton—and who offers him all the assistance in his power. Snob also repeats to him his soliloquy, at least the sum and substance of it, on which the gentleman—recovering a little from his faintness by the help of a glass of brandy and water at the village—thus makes his comment : ‘ I think, sir, you are a stranger to this part of the world.’ ‘ Certainly,’ replied Snob, ‘ it is my first appearance in Leicestershire.’ ‘ I observed you in the run,’ continued the wounded sportsman ; ‘ and very well you went up to the time I fell, but particularly so to the first check. You then rode to a leader, and made an excellent choice ; but after that period, I saw you not only attempting a line of your own, but taking liberties with your horse, and anticipated the fate you have met with. If you remain with us long, you will be sure to find out that riding to hounds in Leicestershire is different

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from what it is in most other countries in England, and requires a little apprenticeship. There is much choice of ground ; and if this choice be not judiciously made, and coupled with a cautious observance of pace, a horse is beaten in a very short time. If you doubt my creed, look to the events of this memorable day.’ Snob thanks him for his hints, and notes them in his book of memory.

The fame of Snob and his little bay horse reaches Melton before he walks in himself. ‘ That provincial fellow did not go amiss to-day,’ says one. ‘ Who was that rural-looking man on a neatish bay horse—all but his tail—who was so well with us at the first check ? ’ asks another, who himself could not get to the end, although he went ‘ a good one,’ three parts of the way. There is no one present to answer these questions ; but the next day, and the next, Snob is in the field again, and again in a good place. Further inquiries are made, and satisfactory information obtained. On the fourth day, a nod from one, a ‘ how do you do ? ’ from another, ‘ a fine morning ’ from a third—are tokens good-humouredly bestowed upon him by some of the leading men ; and on the fifth day, after a capital half-hour, in which he has again distinguished himself, a noble bon-vivant¹ thus addresses him—‘ Perhaps, sir, you would like to dine with me to-day ; I shall be happy to see you at seven.’

‘ Covers,’ he writes next day to some friend in his remote western province, ‘ were laid for eight, the favourite number

¹ The writer here alluded to Lord Alvanley.

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of our late king ; and, perhaps His Majesty never sat down to a better-dressed dinner in his life. To my surprise, the subject of fox-hunting was named but once during the evening, and that was when an order was given that a servant might be sent to inquire after a gentleman who had had a severe fall that morning over some timber ; and to ask, by the way, if Dick Christian came alive out of a ditch, in which he had been left, with a clever young thorough-bred one on the top of him.' The writer proceeds to describe an evening in which wit and music were more thought of than wine—and presenting in all respects a perfect contrast to the old notions of a fox-hunting society :—but we have already trespassed on delicate ground.

It is this union of the elegant repose of life with the energetic sports of the field that constitutes the charm of Melton Mowbray ; and who can wonder that young gentlemen, united by profession, should be induced to devote a season or two to such a course of existence ? We must not, however, leave the subject without expressing our regret that resorting, *year after year*, to this metropolis of the chace, should seem at all likely to become a *fashion* with persons whose hereditary possessions lie far from its allurements. It is all very well to go through the training of the acknowledged *school* of ' the craft,' but the country gentleman who understands his duties, and in what the real permanent pleasure of life exists, will never settle down into a regular Meltonian. He will feel that his first concern is with his own proper district, and seek the recreations of the chace,

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if his taste for them outlives the first heyday of youth, among the scenes, however comparatively rude, in which his natural place has been appointed.

THE ROAD

‘Sunt quos curriculo,’ etc.—HORACE.

Even at the present wonder-working period, few greater improvements have been made in any of the useful arts, than in those applied to the system of travelling by land. Projectors and projects have multiplied with our years ; and the fairy-petted princes of the ‘*Arabian Nights’ Entertainments*’ were scarcely transported from place to place with more facility or despatch, than Englishmen are at the present moment. From Liverpool to Manchester, thirty-six miles, in an hour and a half !—surely Dædalus is come amongst us again ; but we will, for the present, confine our observations to *the road* ; to coaches, coach-horses, coachmen, and coach-masters. We are not thinking of the travelling chariot and four—though, to be sure, the report given us of Lord Londonderry’s speaking in the House of Peers one night, and being at his own house in Durham the next (two hundred and fifty miles off), is astonishing, and was a performance that no other country under the sun could accomplish ; yet bribes to postillions and extra relays of horses might have been called in aid here. We shall, there-

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fore, confine ourselves, at present, to the usual course of public conveyances ;—and a sentence in the private letter of a personal friend of our own has suggested the subject to us. ‘ I was out hunting,’ he writes, ‘ last season, on a *Monday*, near Brighton, and dined with my father in Merrion Square, Dublin, at six o’clock on the following *Wednesday*—distance four hundred miles ! ’ It was done thus :—he went from Brighton in an afternoon coach that set him down in London in time for the Holyhead mail ; and this mail, with the help of the steamer to cross the Channel, delivered him in Dublin at the time mentioned. But expedition alone is not our boast. Coach travelling is no longer a disgusting and tedious labour, but has long since been converted into comparative ease, and really approaches to something like luxury ; otherwise it could never have had any chance to engage the smallest part of the attention of that genuine ‘ *Epicuri de grege porcus* ’—the late happily-named Dr. Kitchener.¹ It is difficult to determine the exact period at which a stage-coach first appeared upon the road ; but it seems to be pretty well ascertained, that in 1662, there were but six, and one of the wise men of those days—John Crosswell, of the Charter House—tried his best to write them down. It was supposed he had the countenance of the country gentlemen, who were afraid, if their wives could get easily and cheaply conveyed to London, they might not settle so well afterwards to their domestic duties at the Hall

¹ Dr. Johnson boasted of having travelled from London to Salisbury in one day, by the common stage, ‘ hung, high, and rough ’ !

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or Grange. We will, however, only go back ninety-four years. In 1742, the Oxford stage-coach left London at seven o’clock in the morning, and reached Uxbridge at mid-day. It arrived at High-Wycombe at five in the evening, where it rested for the night ; and proceeded at the same rate for the seat of learning on the morrow. Here, then, were ten hours consumed each day in travelling twenty-seven miles, and nearly two days in performing what is now done with the greatest ease under six hours. To go from London to York—two hundred miles—used to take six days ; it now occupies twenty hours !¹ From London to Exeter, eighty years ago, the proprietors of coaches promised ‘a safe and expeditious journey in a fortnight.’ Private carriages now accomplish the journey—one hundred and seventy-five miles—in twenty hours ; and the mail (the Devonport) in seventeen, passing through Wincaunton, a new route, within the last month. The Manchester Telegraph, from the Bull and Mouth, performs her journey, with the utmost regularity, in eighteen hours !

May we be permitted, since we have mentioned the *‘Arabian Nights,’* to make a little demand on our readers’ fancy, and suppose it possible that a worthy old gentleman of this said year—1742—had fallen comfortably asleep, *à la Dodswell*, and never awoke till Monday last in Piccadilly ? ‘What coach, your honour ?’ says a ruffianly-looking fellow, much like what he might have been had he lived a hundred

¹ According to Creech’s *‘Fugitive Pieces,’* there was only one coach from Edinburgh to London, which was from twelve to sixteen days on the road.

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years back. ‘I wish to go home to Exeter,’ replies the old gentleman, mildly. ‘Just in time, your honour, here she comes—them there grey horses ; where’s your luggage ?’ ‘Don’t be in a hurry,’ observes the stranger : ‘that’s a gentleman’s carriage !’ ‘It ain’t ! I tell you,’ says the cad ; ‘it’s the Comet, and you must be as quick as lightning.’ *Nolens volens*, the remonstrating old gentleman is shoved into the Comet by a cad at each elbow, having been three times assured his luggage is in the hind boot, and twice three times denied having ocular demonstration of the fact.

However, he is now seated ; and ‘What *gentleman* is going to drive us ?’ is his first question to his fellow-passengers. ‘He is no gentleman, sir,’ says a person who sits opposite to him, and who happens to be a proprietor of the coach. ‘He has been on the Comet ever since she started, and is a very steady young man.’ ‘Pardon my ignorance,’ replies the regenerated ; ‘from the cleanliness of his person, the neatness of his apparel, and the language he made use of, I mistook him for some enthusiastic bachelor of arts, wishing to become a charioteer after the manner of the illustrious ancients.’ ‘You must have been long in foreign parts, sir,’ observes the proprietor. In five minutes, or less, after this parley commenced the wheels went round, and in another five the coach arrived at Hyde Park gate ; but long before it got there, the worthy gentleman of 1742 (set down by his fellow-travellers for either a little cracked, or an emigrant from the backwoods of America), exclaimed, ‘What ! off the stones already ?’ ‘You have never been on

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the stones,’ observes his neighbour on his right ; ‘ no stones in London now, sir.’ ‘ Bless me ! ’ quoth our friend, ‘ here’s a noble house ! to whom does it belong ? But why those broken windows, those iron blinds, and strong barricade ? ’¹ ‘ It is the Duke of Wellington’s,’ says the coach-proprietor, ‘ the greatest captain since the days of Scipio. An ungrateful people made an attack upon his life, on the anniversary of the day upon which he won the most important battle ever fought in Europe.’ Here a passenger in black threw out something about Alcibiades, which, however, the rattle made it impossible to understand. ‘ But we are going at a great rate ! ’ exclaims again the stranger. ‘ Oh no, sir,’ says the proprietor, ‘ *we never go fast over this stage !* We have time allowed in consequence of being subject to interruptions, and we make it up over the lower ground.’ Five and thirty minutes, however, bring them to the noted town of Brentford. ‘ Hah ! ’ says the old man, becoming young again ; ‘ what ! no improvement in this filthy place ? Is old Brentford still here ? a national disgrace ! Pray, sir, who is your county member now ? ’ ‘ His name is Hume, sir,’ was the reply. ‘ The modern Hercules,’ added the gentleman on the right ; ‘ the real cleanser of the Augean stable.’ ‘ A gentleman of large property in the county, *I presume*,’ said the man of the last century. ‘ Not an acre,’ replied the communicative proprietor : ‘ a Scotch-

¹ Nearly on the site occupied by Apsley House stood, in 1742, the suburban inn, the Hercules’ Pillars, where Squire Western put up on his arrival in town in quest of his daughter ; and from whence, by the by, he sent back his *chaplain* several stages to fetch his forgotten tobacco-box !

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man from the town of Montrose.' 'Ay, ay ; nothing like the high road to London for those Scotchmen. A great city merchant, no doubt, worth a plum or two.' 'No such thing, sir,' quoth the other ; 'the gentleman was a doctor, and made his fortune in the Indies.' 'No quack, I warrant you.' The proprietor was silent ; but the clergyman in the corner again muttered something which was again lost, owing to the coach coming at the instant, at the rate of ten miles in the hour, upon the vile pavement of Brentford.

In five minutes under the hour the Comet arrives at Hounslow, to the great delight of our friend, who by this time waxed hungry, not having broken his fast before starting. 'Just fifty-five minutes and thirty-seven seconds,' says he, 'from the time we left London !—wonderful travelling, gentlemen, to be sure, but much too fast to be safe. However, thank Heaven, we are arrived at a good-looking house ; and now, waiter ! I hope you have got breakf——' Before the first syllable, however, of the word could be pronounced, the worthy old gentleman's head struck the back of the coach by a jerk, which he could not account for (the fact was, three of the four fresh horses were bolters), and the waiter, the inn, and indeed Hounslow itself ('terraeque urbesque recedunt'), disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. Never did such a succession of doors, windows, and window-shutters pass so quickly in his review before—and he hoped they might never do so again. Recovering, however, a little from his surprise—'My dear sir,' said he, 'you told me we were to change horses at Hounslow ? Surely they are not

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so inhuman as to drive these poor animals another stage at this unmerciful rate?’ ‘Change horses, sir!’ says the proprietor; ‘why, we changed them whilst you were putting on your spectacles, and looking at your watch. Only one minute allowed for it at Hounslow, and it is often done in fifty seconds by those nimble-fingered horse-keepers.’ ‘You astonish me!—but really I do not like to go so fast.’ ‘Oh, sir! we always spring them over these six miles. It is what we call *the hospital ground*.’ This alarming phrase is presently interpreted: it intimates that horses whose ‘backs are getting down instead of up in their work’—some ‘that won’t hold an ounce down hill, or draw an ounce up’—others ‘that kick over the pole one day, and over the bars the next’—in short, all the reprobates, styled in the road slang *bo-kickers*, are sent to work these six miles, because *here* they have nothing to do but to gallop—not a pebble as big as a nutmeg on the road; and so even, that it would not disturb the equilibrium of a spirit-level.

The coach, however, goes faster and faster over the *hospital ground*, as the *bo-kickers* feel their legs, and the collars get warm to their shoulders; and having ten outsides, the luggage of the said ten, and a few extra packages besides on the roof, she rolls rather more than is pleasant, although the centre of gravity is pretty well kept down by four not slender insides, two well-laden boots, and three huge trunks in the slide. The gentleman of the last century, however, becomes alarmed—is sure the horses are running away with the coach—declares he perceives by the shadow

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that there is nobody on the box, and can see the reins dangling about the horses' heels. He attempts to look out of the window, but his fellow-traveller dissuades him from doing so :—‘ You may get a shot in your eye from the wheel. Keep your head in the coach ; it 's all right, depend on 't. We always spring 'em over this stage.’ Persuasion is useless ; for the horses increase their speed, and the worthy old gentleman looks out. But what does he see ? Death and destruction before his eyes !—No ; to his surprise he finds the coachman firm at his post, and in the act of taking a pinch of snuff from the gentleman who sits beside him on the *bench*, his horses going at the rate of a mile in three minutes at the time. ‘ But suppose anything should break, or a linchpin should give way and let a wheel loose ? ’ is the next appeal to the communicative, but not very consoling proprietor. ‘ Nothing *can* break, sir,’ is the reply : ‘ all of the very best stuff ; axletrees of the best K.Q. iron, faggotted edgeways, well bedded in the timbers ; and as to linchpins, we have not one about the coach. We use the best patent boxes that are manufactured. In short, sir, you are as safe in it as if you were in your bed.’ ‘ Bless me,’ exclaims the old man, ‘ what improvements ! And the roads ! ’ ‘ They are perfection, sir,’ says the proprietor : ‘ no horse walks a yard in this coach between London and Exeter—all trotting-ground now.’ ‘ A little *galloping* ground, I fear,’ whispers the senior to himself ! ‘ But who has effected all this improvement in your paving ? ’ ‘ An American of the name of M'Adam,’ was the reply—‘ but coachmen call him

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the Colossus of Roads. Great things have likewise been done in cutting through hills and altering the course of roads: and it is no uncommon thing nowadays to see four horses trotting away merrily down hill on that very ground where they formerly were seen walking up hill.’¹

‘And pray, my good sir, what sort of horses may you have over the next stage?’ ‘Oh, sir, no more *bo-kickers*. It is hilly and severe ground, and requires cattle strong and staid. You ’ll see four as fine horses put to the coach at Staines as you ever saw in a nobleman’s carriage in your life.’ ‘Then we shall have no more galloping—no more springing them, as you term it?’ ‘Not quite so fast over the next ground,’ replied the proprietor; ‘but he will make good play over some part of it: for example, when he gets three parts down a hill, he lets them loose, and cheats them out of half the one they have to ascend from the bottom of it. In short, they are half-way up it before a horse touches his collar; and we *must* take every advantage with such a fast coach as this, and one that loads so well, or we should never keep our time. We are now to a minute; in fact, the country people no longer look at the *sun* when they want to set their clocks—they look only to the *Comet*. But, depend upon it, you are quite safe; we have nothing but

¹ Most roads through hilly countries were originally struck out by drivers of pack-horses, who, to avoid bogs, chose the upper ground. Consequently it often happened that point B was lower than point A; yet to go from A to B the traveller ascended a hill to secure sound footing, and then descended to his point.

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first-rate artists on this coach.' 'Artist! artist!' grumbles the old gentleman; 'we had no such term as that.'

'I should like to see this *artist* change horses at the next stage,' resumes our ancient; 'for at the last it had the appearance of magic—"Presto, Jack, and begone!"' 'By all means; you will be much gratified. It is done with a quickness and ease almost incredible to any one who has only read or heard of it; not a buckle nor a rein is touched twice, and still all is made secure; but use becomes second nature with us. Even in *my* younger days it was always half an hour's work—sometimes more. There was—"Now, ladies and gentlemen, what would you like to take? There's plenty of time, while the horses are changing, for tea, coffee, or supper; and the coachman will wait for you—won't you, *Mr. Smith*?" Then Mr. Smith himself was in no hurry; he had a lamb about his coach for one butcher in the town, and perhaps half a calf for another; a barrel of oysters for the lawyer, and a basket of game for the parson, *all on his own account*. In short, the best wheel of the coach was his, and he could not be otherwise than accommodating.'

The coach arrived at Staines, and the ancient gentleman puts his intentions into effect—though he was near being again too late; for by the time he could extract his hat from the netting that suspended it over his head, the leaders had been taken from their bars, and were walking up the yard towards their stables. On perceiving a fine thorough-bred horse led towards the coach with a twitch fastened tightly

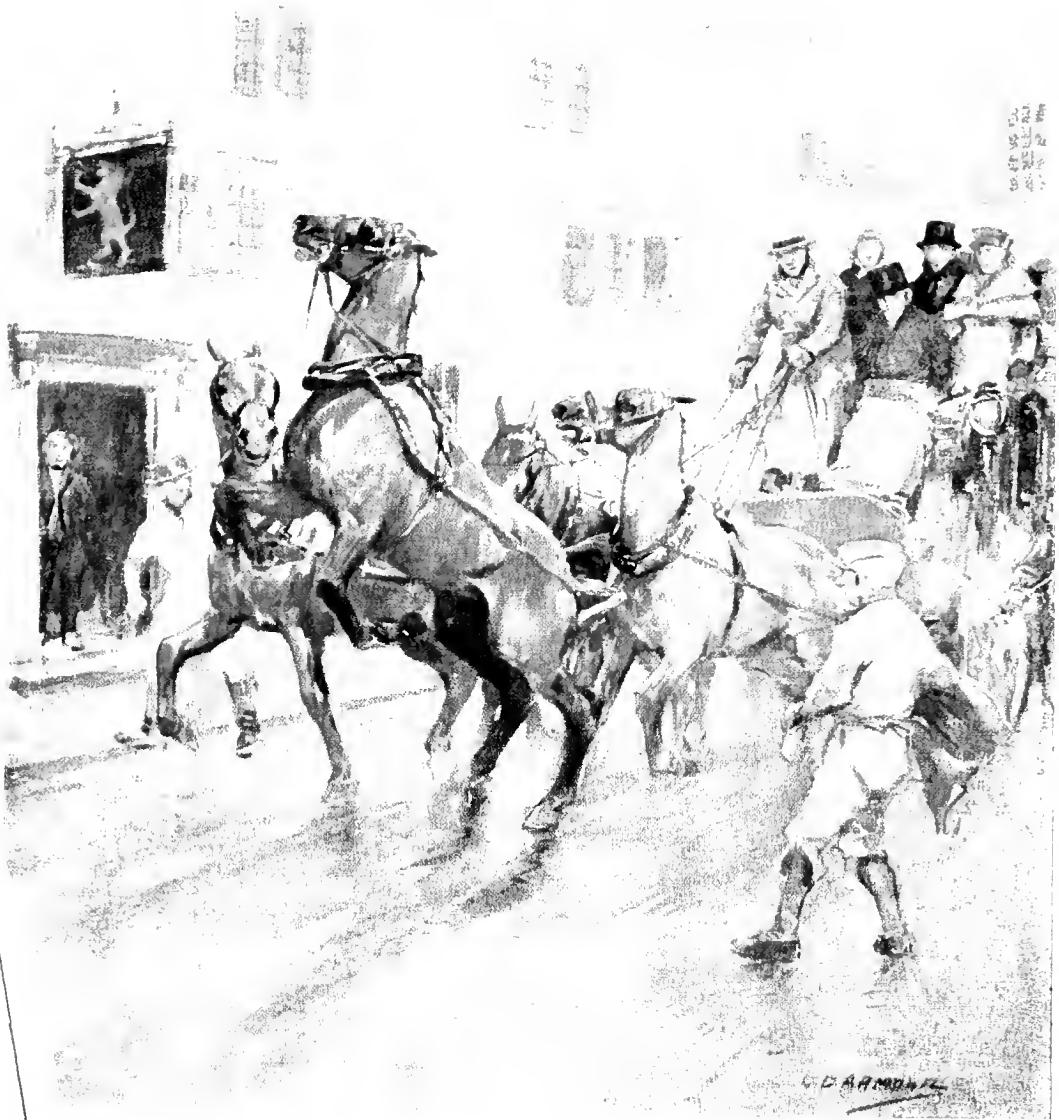
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to his nose, he exclaims, ‘ Holloa, Mr. Horse-keeper ! You are going to put an unruly horse in the coach.’ ‘ What ! this here *oss* ? ’ growls the man ; ‘ the quietest *hanimal* alive, sir ! ’ as he shoves him to the near side of the pole. At this moment, however, the coachman is heard to say in somewhat of an undertone, ‘ Mind what you are about, Bob ; don’t let him touch the roller-bolt.’ In thirty seconds more, they are off—‘ the staid and steady team,’ so styled by the proprietor, in the coach. ‘ Let ’em go, and take care of yourselves,’ says the artist, so soon as he is firmly seated upon his box ; and this is the way in which they start. The near leader rears right on end, and if the rein had not been yielded to him at the instant, he would have fallen backwards on the head of the pole. The moment the twitch was taken from the nose of the thorough-bred near-wheeler, he drew himself back to the extent of his pole-chain—his forelegs stretched out before him—and then like a lion loosened from his toil, made a snatch at the coach that would have broken two pairs of traces of 1742. A steady and good-whipped horse, however, his partner, started the coach himself, with a gentle touch of the thong, and away they went off together. But the thorough-bred one was very far from being comfortable ; it was in vain that the coachman tried to soothe him with his voice, or stroked him with the crop of his whip. He drew three parts of the coach, and cantered for the first mile ; and when he did settle down to his trot, his snorting could be heard by the passengers, being as much as to say, ‘ I was not born to be a slave.’ In fact, as the proprietor

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now observed, ‘ he had been a fair plate horse in his time, but his temper was always queer.’

After the first shock was over, the Conservative of the eighteenth century felt comfortable. The pace was considerably slower than it had been over the last stage, but he was unconscious of the reason for its being diminished. It was to accommodate the queer temper of the race-horse, who, if he had not been humoured at starting, would never have settled down to his trot, but have ruffled all the rest of the team. He was also surprised, if not pleased, at the quick rate at which they were ascending hills which, in his time, he should have been asked by the coachman to have walked up : but his pleasure was short-lived ; the third hill they descended produced a return of his agony. This was what is termed on the road *a long fall of ground*, and the coach rather pressed upon the horses. The temper of the race-horse became exhausted ; breaking into a canter, he was of little use as a wheeler, and there was then nothing for it but a gallop. The leaders only wanted the signal ; and the point of the thong being thrown lightly over their backs, they were off like an arrow out of a bow ; but the rocking of the coach was awful, and more particularly so to the passengers on the roof. Nevertheless, she was not in danger ; the master-hand of the artist kept her in a direct line, and meeting the opposing ground, she steadied, and all was right. The newly-awakened gentleman, however, begins to grumble again. ‘ Pray, my good sir,’ says he anxiously, ‘ do use your authority over your coachman, and *insist* upon



"IF YOU GO THERE, QUOTE THE AUTHOR, 'AND TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.'"

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his putting the drag-chain on the wheel when descending the next hill.’ ‘I have no such authority,’ replies the proprietor ; ‘it is true we are now drawn by my horses, but I cannot interfere with the driving of them.’ ‘But is he not your servant ?’ ‘He is, sir, but I contract to work the coach so many miles in so many hours, and he engages to drive it, and each is subject to a fine if the time be not kept on the road. On so fast a coach as this, every advantage must be taken ; and if we were to drag down such hills as these, we should never reach Exeter to-day.’

Our friend, however, will have no more of it. He quits the coach at Bagshot, congratulating himself on the safety of his limbs. Yet he takes one more peep at the change, which is done with the same despatch as before : three greys and a piebald replacing three chestnuts and a bay—the harness beautifully clean, and the ornaments bright as the sun. Not a word is spoken by the passengers, who merely look their admiration : but the laconic address of the coachman is not lost on the by-standers. ‘Put the bay mare *near wheel* this evening, and the stallion *up to the cheek*,’ said he to his horse-keeper, as he placed his right foot on the roller-bolt—*i.e.* the last step but one to the box. ‘*How is Paddy’s leg ?*’ ‘It’s all right, sir,’ replied the horse-keeper. ‘Let ‘em go, then,’ quoth the artist, ‘and take care of yourselves.’

The worthy old gentleman is now shown into a room, and, after warming his hands at the fire, rings the bell for the waiter. A well - dressed person appears, whom he of course takes for the landlord. ‘Pray, sir,’ says he, ‘have

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you any *slow* coach down this road to-day ? ' ' Why, yes, sir,' replies John ; ' we shall have the Regulator down in an hour.' ' Just right,' said our friend ; ' it will enable me to break my fast, which I have not done to-day.' ' Oh, sir,' observes John, ' these here fast drags be the ruin of us. 'Tis all hurry scurry, and no gentleman has time to have nothing on the road. What will you take, sir ? Mutton-chops, veal-cutlets, beef-steaks, or a fowl (to kill) ? '

At the appointed time the Regulator appears at the door. It is a strong, well-built drag, painted what is called chocolate colour, bedaubed all over with gilt letters—a bull's head on the doors, a Saracen's head on the hind boot, and drawn by four strapping horses ; but it wants the neatness of the other. The passengers may be, by a shade or two, of a lower order than those who had gone forward by the Comet ; nor, perhaps, is the coachman quite so refined as the one we have just taken leave of. He has not the neat white hat, the clean doeskin gloves, the well-cut trousers, the dapper frock ; but still his appearance is respectable, and perhaps, in the eyes of many, more in character with his calling. Neither has he the agility of the artist on the Comet, for he is nearly double his size ; but he is a strong, powerful man, and might be called a pattern-card of the heavy coachmen of the present day—in other words, of a man who drives a coach which carries sixteen passengers instead of fourteen, and is rated at eight miles in the hour instead of ten. ' What room in the Regulator ? ' says our friend to the waiter, as he comes to announce its arrival. ' Full inside, sir, and in

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front ; but you 'll have *the gammon-board* all to yourself, and your luggage is in the hind boot.' ‘ Gammon-board ! Pray, what 's that ? Do you not mean *the basket* ? ’ ‘ Oh no, sir,’ says John, smiling—‘ no such a thing on the road now. It is the hind-dickey, as some call it, where you 'll be as comfortable as possible, and can sit with your back or your face to the coach, or *both*, if you like.’ ‘ Ah, ah,’ continues the old gentleman ; ‘ something new again, I presume.’ However, the mystery is cleared up ; the ladder is reared to the hind-wheel, and the gentleman seated on the gammon-board.

Before ascending to his place, our friend has cast his eye on the team that is about to convey him to Hartford Bridge, the next stage on the great western road, and he perceives it to be of a different stamp from that which he had seen taken from the coach at Bagshot. It consisted of four moderate-sized horses, full of power, and still fuller of condition, but with a fair sprinkling of blood ; in short, the eye of a judge would have discovered something about them not very unlike galloping. ‘ All right ! ’ cried the guard, taking his key-bugle in his hand ; and they proceeded up the village at a steady pace, to the tune of ‘ Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled,’ and continued at that pace for the first five miles. ‘ *I am landed*,’ thinks our friend to himself. Unluckily, however, for the humane and cautious old gentleman, even the Regulator was about to show tricks. Although what is now called a slow coach, she is timed at eight miles in the hour through a great extent of country, and must,

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of course, make play where she can, being strongly opposed by hills lower down the country, trifling as these hills are, no doubt, to what they once were. The Regulator, moreover, loads well, not only with passengers, but with luggage ; and the last five miles of this stage, called the Hartford Bridge Flat, have the reputation of being the best five miles for a coach to be found at this time in England. The ground is firm, the surface undulating, and therefore favourable to draught ; always dry, not a shrub being near it ; nor is there a stone upon it much larger than a marble. These advantages, then, are not lost to the Regulator, or made use of without sore discomposure to the solitary tenant of her gammon-board.

Any one that has looked into books will very readily account for the lateral motion, or rocking, as it is termed, of a coach, being greatest at the greatest distance from the horses (as the tail of a paper kite is in motion whilst the body remains at rest) ; and more especially when laden as this coach was—the greater part of the weight being forward. The situation of our friend, then, was once more deplorable. The Regulator takes but twenty-three minutes for these celebrated five miles, which cannot be done without ‘ springing the cattle ’¹ now and then ; and it was in one of the very best of their gallops that day, that they were met by the coachman of the Comet, who was returning with his *up* coach. When coming out of rival yards, coachmen never fail to cast an eye to the loading of their opponents on the

¹ The term on the road is ‘ springing them ’—the word *cattle* understood.

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road, and *now* that of the *natty* artist of the Comet experienced a high treat. He had a full view of his quondam passenger, and thus described his situation. He was seated with his back to the horses—his arms extended to each extremity of the guard-irons—his teeth set grim as death—his eyes cast down towards the ground, thinking the less he saw of his danger the better. There was what is called *a top-heavy load*—perhaps a ton of luggage on the roof, and, it may be, not *quite* in obedience to the act of parliament standard. There were also two horses at wheel whose strides were of rather unequal length, and this operated powerfully on the coach. In short, the lurches of the Regulator were awful at the moment of the Comet meeting her. A tyro in mechanics would have exclaimed, ‘The centre of gravity must be lost ; the centrifugal force will have the better of it—*over she must go !*’

The centre of gravity having been preserved, the coach arrived safe at Hartford Bridge ; but the old gentleman has again had enough of it. ‘I will walk into Devonshire,’ said he, as he descended from his perilous exaltation. ‘What did that rascally waiter mean by telling me this was a slow coach ? and, moreover, look at the luggage on the roof !’ ‘Only regulation height, sir,’ says the coachman ; ‘we aren’t allowed to have it an inch higher ; sorry we can’t please you, sir, but we will try and make room for you in front.’ ‘*Fronti nulla fides*,’ mutters the worthy to himself as he walks tremblingly into the house—adding, ‘I shall not give this fellow a shilling ; *he is dangerous.*’

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The Regulator being off, the waiter is again applied to. ‘What do you charge per mile posting?’ ‘One and six-pence, sir.’ ‘Bless me! just double! Let me see—two hundred miles, at two shillings per mile, postboys, turnpikes, etc., twenty pounds. This will never do. Have you no coach that does not carry luggage on the top?’ ‘Oh yes, sir,’ replies the waiter, ‘we shall have one to-night that is not allowed to carry a band-box on the roof.’ ‘That’s the coach for me; pray what do you call it?’ ‘The Quicksilver mail, sir: one of the best out of London—Jack White and Tom Brown, picked coachmen,¹ over this ground—Jack White down to-night.’ ‘Guarded and lighted?’ ‘Both, sir; blunderbuss and pistols in the sword-case; a lamp each side the coach, and one under the footboard—see to pick up a pin the darkest night of the year.’ ‘Very fast?’ ‘Oh no, sir; *just keeps time and that’s all*.’ ‘That’s the coach for me, then,’ repeats our hero; ‘and I am sure I shall feel at my ease in it. I suppose it is what used to be called the Old Mercury.’

Unfortunately, the Devonport (commonly called the Quicksilver) mail is half a mile in the hour faster than most in England, and is, indeed, one of the miracles of the road. Let us, then, picture to ourselves our anti-reformer snugly seated in this mail, on a pitch-dark night in November. It is true she has no luggage on the roof, nor much to incommod her elsewhere; but she is a mile in the hour faster than the

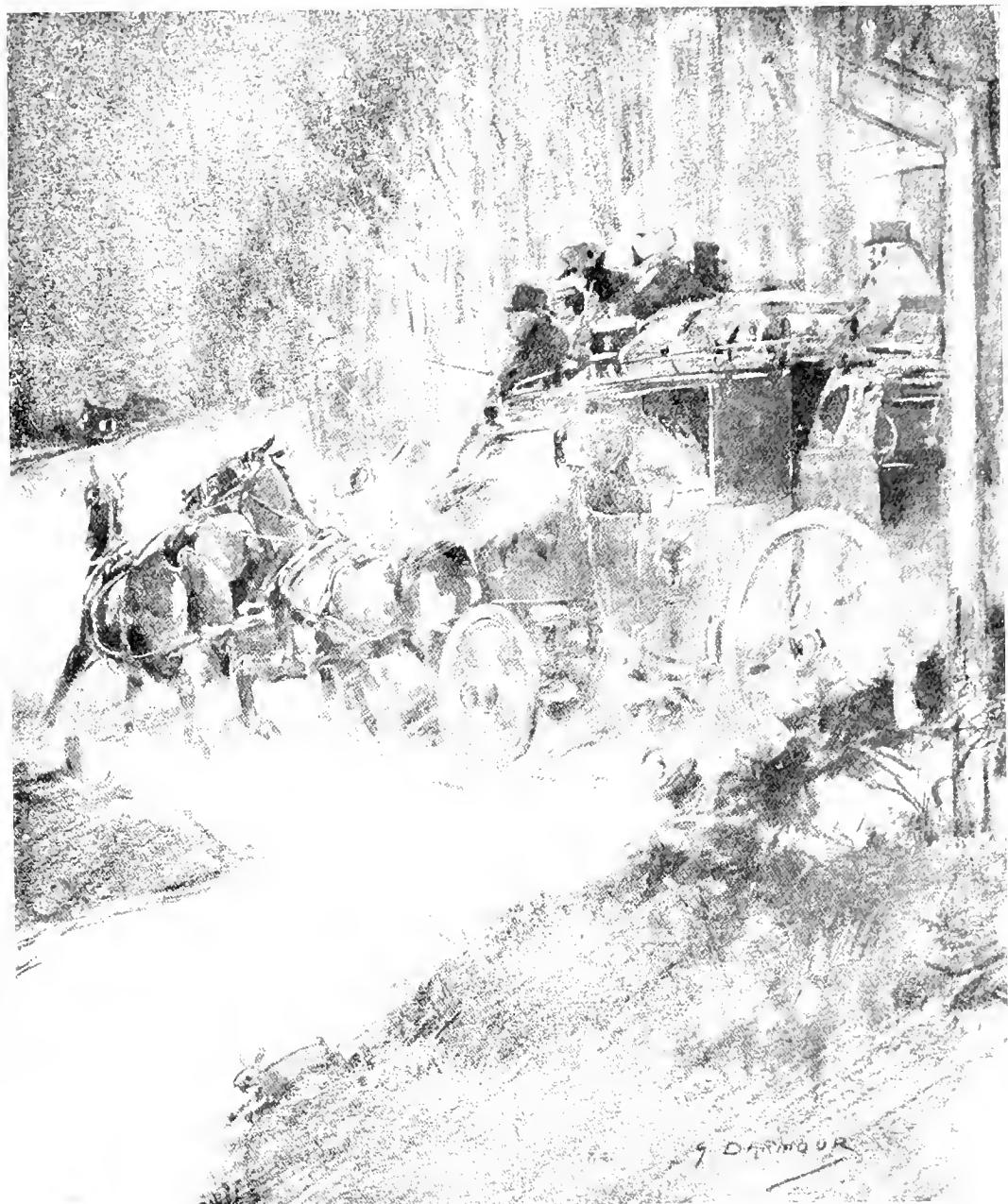
¹ These men were both on the Quicksilver mail, and both first-rate coachmen.

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Comet, at least three miles quicker than the Regulator ; and she performs more than half her journey by lamplight. It is needless to say, then, our senior soon finds out his mistake ; but there is no remedy at hand, for it is the dead of the night, and all the inns are shut up. He must proceed, or be left behind in a stable. The climax of his misfortunes then approaches. Nature being exhausted, sleep comes to his aid, and he awakes on a stage which is called the fastest on the journey—it is four miles of ground, and twelve minutes is the time ! The old gentleman starts from his seat, having dreamed the horses were running away with the coach, and so, no doubt, they might be. He is, however, determined to convince himself of the fact, though the passengers assure him ‘ all ’s right.’ ‘ Don’t put your head out of the window,’ says one of them, ‘ you will lose your hat to a certainty ’ ; but advice is seldom listened to by a terrified man, and next moment a stentorian voice is heard, crying, ‘ Stop, coachman, stop—I have lost my hat and wig ! ’ The coachman hears him not—and in another second the broad wheels of a road waggon have for ever demolished the lost head-gear. But here we must leave our adventurous Gilpin of 1742. We have taken a great liberty with him, it is true, but we are not without our precedent. One of the best chapters in Livy contains the history of ‘ an event which never took place.’ In the full charm of his imagination, the historian brings Alexander into Italy, where he never was in his life, and displays him in his brightest colours. We father our sins, then, upon the Patavinian.

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But we will now adhere to sober prose, and the changes of our own time. Thirty years ago, the Holyhead mail left London *via* Oxford, at eight o'clock at night, and arrived in Shrewsbury between ten and eleven the following night, being twenty-seven hours to one hundred and sixty-two miles. The distance is now *done*, without the least difficulty, in sixteen hours and a quarter ; and the Holyhead mail is actually at Bangor Ferry, eighty-three miles further, in the same time it used to take in reaching the post-office at Shrewsbury. We fancy we now see it, as it was when we travelled on it in our schoolboy time, over the Wolverhampton and Shiffnal stage—in those days loose uncovered sand in part—with Charles Peters or Old Ebden quitting his seat as guard, and coming to the assistance of the coachman, who had flogged his horses till he could flog them no longer. We think we see them crawling up the hill in Shrewsbury town—whip, whip, whip ; and an hour behind their time ‘ by Shrewsbury clock ’ ; the betting not ten to one that she had not been overturned on the road ! It is now a treat to see her approach the town, if not before, never after, her *minute* ; and she forms a splendid day-coach through Wales and England, on her up-journey in the summer ; namely, from Holyhead to Daventry. A young man of the name of Taylor, a spirited proprietor, *horses* her through Shrewsbury, from Hay-gate to Nescliff, in a manner that deserves to be spoken of. The stages are ten and eight, and for these he has a team of bays, a team of greys, and two teams of chestnuts, that can show with



THE STAGE COACH.

‘*Nimrod*’

England.¹ Let us look to another coach out of this town at the period we have been speaking of—‘the Shrewsbury and Chester Highflyer !’ This coach started from Shrewsbury at eight o’clock in the morning, and arrived at Chester about the same time in the evening—distance, *forty miles*. This was always a good hard road for wheels, and rather favourable for draught ; and how then could all these hours be accounted for ? Why, if a ‘commercial gentleman’ had a little business at Ellesmere, there was plenty of time for that. If a ‘*real gentleman*’ wanted to pay a morning visit on the road, there could be no objection to that. In the pork-pie season, half an hour was generally consumed in consuming one of them ; for Mr. Williams, the coachman, was a wonderful favourite with the farmers’ wives and daughters all along the road. The coach dined at Wrexham ; for coaches lived well in those days—they now live upon air ; and Wrexham church was to be seen—a fine specimen of the florid Gothic, and one of the wonders of Wales ! Then Wrexham was also famous for ale—no public breweries in those days in Wales—and, above all, the inn belonged to Sir Watkin.² About two hours were allowed for dinner ; but ‘ Billy Williams ’—one of the best-tempered fellows on earth, as honest as Aristides, and, until lately, upon the same ground—was never particular to half an hour or so. ‘ The coach is ready, gentlemen,’ he

¹ It is a well-known fact that this mail has not varied five minutes in or out of Shrewsbury during the last eighteen months.

² Sir Watkin Williams Wynn, Bart.

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would say ; ‘ but don’t let me disturb you, if you wish for another bottle.’ A coach now runs over this ground *a trifle under four hours* !

The Brighton road may be said to be covered with coaches, no less than twenty-five running upon it in the summer. The fastest is the Vivid, from the Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street, which performs the journey in five hours and a quarter. That called the Age, when driven and horsed by the late Mr. Stevenson, was an object of such admiration at Brighton that a crowd was every day collected to see it start. Mr. Stevenson was a graduate of Cambridge ; but his passion for the *bench* got the better of all other ambitions, and he became a coachman by profession ;—and it is only justice to his memory to admit that, though cut off in the flower of his youth, he had arrived at perfection in his art. His education and early habits had not, however, been lost upon him ; his demeanour was always that of a gentleman ; and it may be fairly said of him, that he introduced the phenomenon of refinement into a stage-coach. At a certain change of horses on the road, a silver sandwich-box was handed to his passengers by his *servant*, accompanied by the offer of a glass of sherry to such as were so inclined. Well-born coachmen prevail on this road. A gentleman connected with the first families in Wales, and whose father long represented his native county in Parliament, horsed and drove one side of the ground with Mr. Stevenson ; and Mr. Charles Jones, brother to Sir Thomas Tyrwhit Jones, had a coach on it called the Pearl, which he both horsed and drove himself ;

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the Bognor coach, horsed by the Messrs. Walkers of Mitchel Grove, and driven in the first style by Mr. John Walker, must also be fresh in the recollection of many of our readers ; and Sir Vincent Cotton, one of our oldest baronets, now drives the Age, having purchased it of Mr. Willan, who drove it, and who now drives the Magnet on the same road. But to return to fast work : the Edinburgh mail runs the distance, four hundred miles, in a little over forty hours, and we may set our watches by it at any point of her journey. Stoppages included, this approaches eleven miles in the hour, and much the greater part of it by lamplight. The Exeter day-coach, the Herald, from the Saracen’s Head, Snow Hill, runs over her ground, a hundred and seventy-three miles, in twenty hours—admirable performance, considering the natural unevenness of the country through which she has to pass. The Devonport mail does her work in first-rate style, two hundred and twenty-seven miles, in twenty-two hours. In short, from London to Cheltenham, Gloucester, Worcester, Birmingham, Norwich, or any other place, whose distance does not much exceed one hundred miles, is now little more than a pleasant morning drive. We say *pleasant* ; for this extraordinary speed is *not* attained, generally speaking, by putting animals to anything like cruel exertion.

A fast coach has, or ought to have, very nearly a horse to every mile of ground it runs—reckoning one way, or ‘one side of the ground.’¹ Proprietors of coaches have at

¹ For example, from London to Shrewsbury is a hundred and fifty-eight miles, and the number of horses kept for the Wonder coach is a hundred

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length found out—though they were a long time before they did discover it—that the hay- and corn-market is not so expensive as the horse-market. They have, therefore, one horse in four always at rest ; or, in other words, each horse lies still on the fourth day, thus having the advantage of man. For example, if ever we turn coach-proprietors, or ‘get into harness,’ as the proper term is—which, as we have become fox-hunters, is by no means impossible—we shall keep ten horses for every ten miles’ stage we engage to cover. In this case, eight horses only will be at work, four up and four down. If the stage be less than eight miles, nine horses may do the work. But no horse in a fast coach can continue to run every day, the excitement of high keep and profuse sweating producing disease. In practice, perhaps, no animal toiling for man, solely *for his profit*, leads so easy and so comfortable a life as the English coach-horse. He is sumptuously fed, kindly treated ; and if he and fifty. Perhaps for the length of ground it travels over, this is the most punctual coach at all its stages on the journey at this time in England. It leaves Shrewsbury at a quarter before six, A.M., and arrives at the Bull and Mouth, London, at a quarter past nine, P.M., and as this was the *first* coach that attempted to become a *day-coach* over so great an extent of ground, we are induced to notice one particular team on it, said to be the most superb of their kind, and for the purpose for which they are used, at this time in Great Britain. They are chestnuts, the property of Mr. Evans, of Wolverhampton ; and their ground is from that town to Wednesbury, a distance of six miles. The coachmen of the Wonder also deserve notice for their uniformly good conduct and skill. Their names are Wood (who drives out of London), Lyley Wilcox, and Hayward.

There is likewise a very fast and well-conducted coach which passes through Shrewsbury, viz., the Hirondelle, from Cheltenham to Liverpool, a hundred and thirty-three miles, in twelve hours and a half ! Both these coaches load uncommonly well.

‘Nimrod’

do suffer a little in his work, he has twenty-three hours in the twenty-four of luxurious ease. He is now almost a stranger to the lash, nor do we ever see him with a broken skin ; but we often see him kick up his heels when taken from his coach, after having performed his stage of ten miles in five minutes under the hour. So much for *condition*.

No horse lives so high as a coach-horse. In the language of the stable, his stomach is the measure of his corn ; he is fed *ad libitum*. The effect of this is visible in two ways :—first, it is surprising to see how soon horses gather flesh in this severe work ; for there is none, as far as muscular exertion goes, more severe whilst it lasts : and, secondly, proprietors find that good flesh is no obstacle to their speed, but, on the contrary, operates to their advantage. Horses draw by their weight, and not by the force of their muscles, which merely assist the application of that weight : the heavier a horse is, then, the more powerful is he in his harness ; in short, it is the weight of the animal which produces the draught, and the play and force of his muscles serve to continue it. Light horses, therefore, how good soever their action, ought not to be put to draw a heavy load, as muscular force cannot act against it for any great length of time.

The average price of horses for fast coaches may be about twenty-five pounds. Fancy teams, and those working out of London, may be rated higher, say thirty pounds, but taking a hundred miles of ground, *well horsed*, the former

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is about the mark.¹ The average period of each horse's service does not exceed four years in a fast coach ; perhaps scarcely so much, although still equal to more moderate work. In a slow one we may allow seven ; but in both cases we are alluding to horses put to work at five or six years old.² Considerable judgment is necessary to the selection of horses for fast work in harness ; for if they have not action which will command the pace they are timed at, they soon destroy themselves. For a wheel-horse, he should have sound fore-legs, or he cannot be depended upon down hill. Good hind-legs and well-spread gaskins are also essential points in a coach-horse ; the weight or force applied proceeding from the fulcrum formed by the hinder feet. The price we have named as the average one for such animals may appear a very low one ; but we must remember that to be a hunter or a good roadster, a horse must have length of shoulder, length of frame, peculiarly placed hinder-legs, and a well-bitted mouth : whereas, without any of these qualities he may make an excellent coach-horse ; and hence the value of the coach-market to our breeders. Blemished horses also find their way into coaches, as do those whose tempers are bad ; neither is a blind horse, with good courage, altogether objectionable, now the roads are so level.³ The following description of a road coach-horse,

¹ Of course we speak of prime cost, for coach-horses increase in value as they acquire condition, and are found to be equal to their work.

² There are at this time leaders on the Dover road, which have run together over the same stage upwards of twelve years !

³ Thirty years back blind horses were numerous in stage-coaches ; in

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for fast work, was given by the author of these papers at the request of an eminent London coach-proprietor : ‘ First requisite, action ; second, sound legs and feet, with power and breeding equal to the nature and length of the ground he will work upon. Third, good wind, as the power of respiration is called, without which the first and second qualifications will not avail, in very fast work, for any length of time. A clear-winded coach-horse will always keep his condition, consequently his health, because he does not feel distress on a reasonable length of ground. The hunter and the racer are good or bad, chiefly in proportion to their powers of respiration ; and such is the case with the road coach-horse. The most proper food, then, for a coach-horse in fast work is that which affords him sufficient nourishment, without having an injurious effect on his wind ; in other words, that which does not impair his respiratory organs by pressing on them.’

It may probably surprise many of our readers to be informed of the extent to which individual persons in England embark their capital in what is termed the coaching-line. Mr. Chaplin, who is the occupier of the five following ‘ yards,’ as they are termed, in London—namely, those of the Spread Eagle and Cross Keys, Gracechurch Street ; the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane ; the White Horse, Fetter Lane ; and the Angel, behind St. Clement’s—has no fact, it would now and then happen that the whole team were in darkness. ‘ Well over *that*, sir,’ said one of the old school of coachmen to a passenger that sate beside him on the box, having just passed a dangerous bridge on a foggy night ; ‘ only one eye among us ! ’ That ‘ one ’ was his own !

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less than thirteen hundred horses at work, in various coaches, on various roads ; and Messrs. Horne and Sherman, the two next largest coach-proprietors in London, have about seven hundred each. Those who have not witnessed it might, perhaps, be still more astonished at the regularity and ease with which these prodigious, apparently overwhelming, establishments are conducted, by the means of foremen and subordinates well trained to their business.¹

It may not be uninteresting to the uninitiated to learn how a coach is *worked*. We will, then, assume that A, B, C, and D enter into a contract to *horse* a coach eighty miles, each proprietor having twenty miles ; in which case he is said to *cover both sides of the ground*, or *to and fro*. At the expiration of twenty-eight days, the lunar month, a settlement takes place ; and if the gross earnings of the coach should be five pounds per mile, there will be four hundred pounds to divide between the four proprietors, *after* the following charges have been deducted ; viz., tolls, duty to government, mileage (or hire of the coach, to the coach-maker), two coachmen's wages, porters' wages, rent or charge of booking-offices at each end, and washing the coaches. These charges may amount to one hundred pounds, which leaves three hundred pounds to keep eighty horses and to pay the horse-keepers, for a period of twenty-eight days, which gives, within a fraction, a pound a week for each horse. Thus it appears that a fast coach, properly

¹ Mr. Chaplin is likewise proprietor of two London hotels, residing in that called ' Osborne's ' in the Adelphi.

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appointed, cannot pay unless its gross receipts amount to five pounds per double mile ; and that, even then the *horser’s* profits depend on the luck he has with his stock.

In the present age, the art of mechanism is eminently reduced to the practical purposes of life, and the modern form of the stage-coach seems to have arrived at perfection. It combines prodigious strength with almost incredible lightness, not weighing more than about eighteen hundred-weight ; and, being kept so much nearer the ground than formerly, is of course considerably safer. Accidents, no doubt, occur, and a great many more than meet the public eye ; but how should this be otherwise, when we take into account the immense number of coaches on the several different roads, a great portion of which travel through the night, and have all the varieties of our climate to contend with ? No one will assert that the proprietors guard against accidents to the utmost of their power ; but the great competition they have to encounter is a strong stimulant to their exertions on this score. Indeed, in some respects, the increase of pace has become the traveller’s security.¹ Coaches and harness must be of the best quality, horses must be fresh and sound, and coachmen of science and respectability can alone be employed. In fact, to the increased pace of their coaches is the improvement in these men’s moral character to be attributed. They have not time now for drinking ;

¹ To give one instance—The Worcester mail was one of the slowest on the road, and the oftenest overturned. She is now fast, and reckoned one of the safest in England.

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and they come in collision with a class of persons superior to those who formerly were stage-coach passengers, by whose example it has been impossible for them not to profit in all respects. A coachman drunk on his box is now a rarity. A coachman *quite sober* was, even within our memory, still more so. But let us press this question a little further : do the proprietors guard against accidents *to the very extent of their ability* ? We fear not : too many of them, to touch only one point, allow their coachmen to omit the use of the hand or end-buckle to their reins, which to our own knowledge has lately been productive of several accidents. This is *new*, and it is a mere piece of affectation, and should be put a stop to ; for surely if a coachman fancies he has not time to '*pin his ribbons*' before mounting the box, he can do so after having proceeded a short distance on his stage ; and he cannot say he has not time to unbuckle them before he comes to the end of it. It is evident, that with reins unbuckled at the ends, should either of them drop out of his hand, all command over his team is gone. Moreover, in the hands of the best coachman, a wheel-horse will now and then drop, and should he not fortunately in this case *be dragged on the ground so as to stop the coach*, up he jumps, and, expecting the whip, rushes forward with his head loose, his reins having been drawn through the coachman's hand. Had it been buckled at the end, such an occurrence could not have happened ; and if, after our warning, damages are sought for on this score, coach-proprietors may depend on it they must be prepared to smart. It is also now become

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fashionable to have no bearing reins to the harness, which, with horses having good mouths, may be, perhaps, dispensed with ; but the absence of the pad and crupper cannot be unattended with danger.¹

That, in fact, nineteen accidents in twenty are the effects of want of proper precaution, cannot be denied. Coachmen, it is true, are not theoretical philosophers ; but experience teaches them, that if they drive fast round corners, the centre of gravity must be more or less disturbed by thus diverging from the right line ; and if lost, *over she goes* : yet a great number of the overturns that occur happen exactly in this way. Why then are not coachmen strictly enjoined by their employers to avoid so gross an error ? But it is in the act of descending hills that the majority of catastrophes take place ; and the coachman needs not book-learning to enlighten him as to the *wherefore*. Let him only throw up a stone, and watch its descent. If it falls sixteen feet in the first second, it will fall three times that distance in the next, and so on. Thus it is with his coach ; the continued impulse it acquires in descending a hill presses upon the wheel-horses, until at last it exceeds their powers of resistance.

¹ A false notion has lately got abroad, that horses are less apt to fall down with their heads quite at liberty, as those on the Continent are generally driven. Physically speaking, this must be false ; forasmuch as the weight being in this case thrown more forward, the centre of gravity is more difficult to be recovered when disturbed. A short time since, the author saw ten horses out of eleven, in two Boulogne and Paris diligences, with broken knees, and called a respectable inhabitant of the first-named town to witness the fact. French diligence-horses, however, fall from want of wind, as well as from want of assistance to keep them on their legs.

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In short, they have a new force to contend with at every step they take. But this is not all. Instead of checking the *active* force of his coach before she begins to move downward, he too often adds that to the fresh impulse she acquires on her descent. Every coachman, who has a regard for the safety of his own neck, should check the velocity of his coach at the top of every hill ; which, in the language of the road, is termed ‘ taking a hill in time.’ He may, in that case, if his harness be sound, drive his coach down most hills now found on our roads with ease ; and, when a certain way down them, may increase his pace, with perfect safety, to meet the opposing ground at the bottom. With heavily-laden coaches we prefer this to the drag-chain on one wheel only, by which hundreds of them have been pulled over on slippery roads ; and which is a great check to speed, too, as the *momentum* cannot be taken advantage of, in continuing the motion of the coach when she brings the horses to their collars again.

All persons who have travelled on the Continent have observed an appendage to the public carriages by which both hinder-wheels can be ‘ dragged,’ as the term is, or their rapid rotation checked, by the *conducteur*, or guard, without his descending from his seat ; and which is vulgarly called ‘ *le mechanique*.’ It is much to be regretted that a similar instrument is not in general use with our stage and mail-coaches, as it would be the means of preventing numerous accidents that occur by coaches overpowering horses when descending *long* hills, but such as are not considered sufficiently steep to require the drag-chain ; or, in case of horses

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attempting to get the better of their driver. A gentleman of the name of Tongue, residing in Staffordshire, has obtained a patent for a machine, to answer this end, known as ‘Tongue’s patent drag,’ and it is now used on several coaches out of London, as well as on various cross-roads. It is more simple in its construction than that we see on the Continent, and its additional weight—not exceeding twenty pounds—is not worthy of regard when balanced against its security to passengers, and the benefit wheel-horses derive from being eased of the pressure of the load, which is considerable, even on a moderate descent.

The question often arises,—is there danger in galloping horses in a coach on perfectly level ground? Under certain circumstances there is. For instance, if there happen to be two horses at wheel which take unequal strides in their gallop, their action will be felt by the coach—they being so near to her—and lateral motion will be produced, by which her equilibrium may be destroyed. When a coach once begins to swing, a little thing will upset her—even passing over a small stone—as the faster she goes on level ground, the more weight is thrown upon her fore-wheels, and, of course, increased on a descent. Neither is a good road a security to her; on the contrary, the harder the surface of it the more danger, there being nothing to hold the wheels to the ground. If, however, it were possible to make the stride and draught of four horses quite equal, their increased speed would have but little effect on a coach upon tolerably level ground; which is proved by her being *quite steady*

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in ascending a hill at ever so quick a rate, when every horse is at work. This shows the necessity of *putting horses well together*, and driving them with a steady hand.

The worst of accidents—and one which, with the present structure of coaches, can never be entirely provided against—arises from broken axletrees, from which cause, since these articles first appeared, several lives have been lost, and more limbs fractured. There is certainly something startling in the reflection, that whenever we travel by a coach we are liable to this occurrence, which must happen if the weight above be too great for the sustaining power below ; and for this reason the mails are safer than stage-coaches, as not loading so heavily. Everything that can be done to prevent the *snapping* of the axletree has now been adopted, we think, by our coach-builders. In case it does break, what is called the *idle* wheel, in addition to the active wheel, is the only security against an upset ; but as this somewhat adds to the weight of a coach, the adoption of it has been abandoned. Accidents, then, are always to be apprehended by travellers from this cause ; the loss of wheels is another ; and until an act of parliament enforces the use of the patent box, or the screw-nut, so as to trust no longer to the common linchpin, it will remain a third.¹

¹ The only linchpin that can be relied on is the wooden one, which, together with the screw-nut, is used in the French diligences. It is made of heart of oak ; and being once driven through the eye of the arm, cannot be drawn out again, without cutting off the bottom of it, as it swells to a size which prevents its returning the way it went in. *There is no dependence on iron linchpins.*

The model of a carriage has lately been exhibited, built on a plan by which

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On the whole, however, travelling by public conveyances was never so secure as it is at the present time. Nothing can be more favourable to it than the build of the modern coaches. The boots, being let down between the springs, keep the load, consequently the centre of gravity, low ; the wheels of many of them are secured by patent boxes ; and in every part of them the best materials are used. The cost of coaches of this description is from a hundred and thirty pounds to a hundred and fifty pounds ; but they are generally hired from the maker, at from two pence half-penny to three pence per mile.

The common height of the stage-coach wheels of the present day is as follows :—the fore-wheels, three feet four inches, the hinder, four feet eight inches. As the former turn round so much oftener than the latter, and also bear more weight, they require to have their fellies fresh wrung about every five weeks ; whereas the latter will stand good for two months or more. The strength of a wheel depends greatly on the attention paid to the arrangement and framing of the spokes. In common wheels, they are framed regularly and equally all round the thickest part of the nave, the tenons of the spokes being so bevelled as to stand about three inches out of perpendicular, by which is produced the *dishing* wheel. This dishing, or concave, wheel is not essential on our present rutless roads, and perpendicular wheels are preferable on level ground. The best wheels

the centre of gravity is preserved under any ordinary circumstances to which our coaches are exposed on the road.

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we know of are those under our mail-coaches. The spokes are framed somewhat differently into the nave, which is made rather larger than is usual for common coach-wheels, and every other spoke is framed perpendicular to the nave. Hence, the mortises to receive them in it are not made in a parallel line around it, but stand as it were in two different parallels—one without the other ; by which means greater solidity is given to the nave, and an immense addition of strength to the wheel. What is called the patent hoop, always used in stage-coaches—having the iron tire drawn into one complete ring, is not put on these wheels ; but the common strokes, as they are called, forged and hammered to the sweep of the rings, and in lengths equal to those of the fellies, are put on red hot, and well secured by rivetted nails. The mail fore-wheel is somewhat higher than that of the stage-coach, which is an advantage. Low fore-wheels place the axle so much below the level of the wheel-horses' breasts, that they have not only the carriage to draw, but also part of its weight to bear. This weight distresses their hams, stifles, and hocks, and accounts for coach-horses being so soon unfit for the saddle. It is evident that attention to these points is necessary in putting horses to a coach ; and when the fore-wheels are low, the wheel-horses should have as much length of trace as can be given them, for the line of traction should be as nearly even with the draught of the horse as we can make it.¹

¹ Thus it is with a farmer's waggon. When the shaft-horse is standing at rest—allowing two degrees of an angle for that position—the point of the

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It requires, also, some art to load a coach properly. A waggoner on country roads always puts the greater weight over his hinder wheels, being the highest ; and he is right, for he has obstacles to meet, and the power necessary to overcome them diminishes with the increased diameter of the wheel. On our turnpike roads, however, where there is now no obstacle, the load on a coach should be condensed as much as possible, and the heaviest packages placed in the fore boot. Indeed, all the heavier packages should be put into the boots, and the lighter ones only on the roof. A well-loaded coach is sure to follow well, and is always pleasant to ride in ; and as a weak child totters less when it has a weight on its head, coach-springs break less frequently with a moderately heavy and well-adjusted load than with a light one.

Allowance is made for the retarding power of friction in all kinds of machinery, and of course it is not overlooked in carriages. The coachman sees its effect every time he puts the drag-chain on his wheel, which merely decreases the velocity of his coach, by increasing the quantity of friction. Common-sense must likewise instruct him, that when two

shaft is nearly even with the top of the fore-wheel ; but when the horse exerts his strength to move a load, he brings his breast so much nearer the ground, that the line of draught is almost horizontal, and in a line with its centre. The trace of a coach-horse, *when he stands at rest*, is also *oblique* to the horizon, and must be so with low fore-wheels ; but it approaches the horizontal when he is at work, and the nearer it approaches to it the better. Horses draw by their weight, and not by the force of their muscles ; the hinder feet, then, being the fulcrum of the lever by which their weight acts against a load, when they pull hard it depresses their chests—thus increasing the lever of its weight, and diminishing the lever by which the load resists its efforts.

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bodies are rubbing against each other in opposite directions—as the arm of an axletree and the iron-box of a wheel—the smoother these bodies can be made, the less, of course, is the friction. As economy in the expense of power is one of the chief objects of a mechanic, it is not to be wondered at that great pains have been taken in the construction of the axles and boxes of carriages. To Mr. Collinge are we chiefly indebted for his patent cylindrical axletree and box, which have stood the test of many years, and given universal satisfaction—for the silent and steady motion they impart to the wheel—for their great strength and durability—and for carrying oil several thousand miles without the necessity of replenishing it. They are turned upon a lathe, case-hardened, and rendered as smooth on the surface as it is possible, in the existing state of the art, to render them. But as the expense of these boxes is too great for stage-coaches, patents have been taken out for others of a less costly nature, which answer extremely well, and have long since been in use on all the coaches that run from the Bull and Mouth, and many others besides. *No stage-coach can be safe without the patent boxes*, as they are termed, but there is a prejudice amongst proprietors against them. They certainly add to the cost, and also to the weight, of the coach ; and by preventing the wheels from escaping any obstacle that may present itself—the consequence of their being air-tight—they wear out rather sooner than when used with the common axle. Their general adoption, however, would be a great safeguard to the public, as well as of

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considerable assistance to trade. In the mail-coaches, the boxes are of a different construction, and owe their safety to four bolts, which pass completely through the nave of the wheel, having a square shoulder on the back of the nave, with screws and nuts on its front. We have no hesitation in saying, this is the best wheel ever put under a coach ; and, of course, Mr. Vidler, the late contractor for the mails, had a patent for it. The mails could never do their work with the common axle and box.¹

Cicero laments the want of post-offices, and well he might. Nothing can excel that department in our country, as it has long been administered by the late Sir Francis Freeling ; although we feared in this, as in more important matters, we were about to lose sight of the good old rule of ‘letting well alone.’ It was said to have been the intention of Government to substitute light carriages with two horses, for the present mail-coaches drawn by four ; but we had

¹ An improvement on all the patents yet brought forth was some time since attempted by two spirited coach-makers in London, but we have not heard of its success. Its object is to diminish draught in two distinct ways—first, by reducing the bearing parts, and thereby lessening friction ; and, secondly, by diminishing the ‘dead hug,’ as it is termed, which is always an attendant on the cylindrical arm and box. It substitutes a square instead of a cylindrical box, in which the cylindrical axle or arm works. This is made to fit on each of the four sides as true and as air-tight as if it were a complete circle ; and if the four different bearings are but one-eighth of an inch each, it is apparent that there is but half an inch of surface for the arm to oppose or work against in each axle ; and so on in proportion to the size of the bearing. Nor is this all : those parts or angles not touched by the arm—as may be seen when the box is revolving—serve as reservoirs for oil, affording a constant supply. The nose of the arm is protected by a circular end, ground on to form the nicest fit, and prevent the possibility of the smallest particle of gravel finding its way into the box.

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many suspicions as to the result of such a change. It is true, the persons that horse the mails cry out lustily against the Government for not remunerating them better for the increased speed at which they are now required to travel—the maximum price being tenpence a mile. Indeed, several proprietors have, in consequence of their losses, taken their horses off some of the mails ; and others would refuse fresh contracts, unless more liberal terms were offered them. The Chester has already disappeared. These complaints have, no doubt, been troublesome—and, in some cases, perhaps, not quite reasonable ; but we will state our reasons for thinking the present *system* cannot be improved upon.

First, the build of the mails is admirable for endurance. Why do we oftener hear of axletrees and other parts giving way with stage-coaches, and scarcely ever in the mails ? Simply because the sustaining powers of the latter are more than equal to the weight, and *they cannot lose their wheels*. Moreover, they are excellently adapted for quick travelling ; the centre of gravity being low—and now still lower in those furnished by the new contractor, the term of Mr. Vidler's contract having expired ; and they are light in comparison with stage-coaches that run as fast as they do ; indeed, amongst coachmen, they are slightly termed 'paper carts,' in reference to comparative weight, and their great speed on the road. When the mail-coach of the present day starts from London for Edinburgh, a man may safely bet a hundred to one that she arrives to her time ; but let a light

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two-horse vehicle set out on the same errand, and the betting would strangely alter.

It is quite a mistaken notion, that a carriage is less liable to accidents for being *light*. On the contrary, she is more liable to them than one that is well laden *in proportion to her sustaining powers*. In the latter case, she runs steadily along, and is but little disturbed by any obstacle or jerk she may meet on the road ; in the former she is constantly on ‘the jump,’ as coachmen call it, and her iron parts very liable to snap. Our present mail-coach work reflects the highest credit on the state of our roads, and everything connected with them. It will be borne in mind that, with one or two exceptions, they all begin their journey at night, and those which perform very long distances have two nights to one day ; yet, see the wonderful regularity with which they arrive, and the few bad accidents they meet with ! But, indeed, all our night-travelling in England is deserving of high praise for the expedition and regularity with which it is conducted ; and, we have reason to believe, fewer accidents happen to night-coaches than to such as run by day. This, however, may be accounted for. Barring fogs, it matters not how dark a night is, as our lamps supply the light of the sun ; and, taking the average of nights, have a preference over the moon. Coachmen—now always sober—are then more careful, and less given to *larking*, and the road is generally clear of any carriages but those which travel with lights. Horses also run more steadily by night, and certainly with more ease ; it is a very common case to hear a

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coachman say, such a horse is ‘a good night horse, but an indifferent one by day.’ Some cannot bear a hot sun on their backs ; and those whose wind is not so good as it should be, run with much greater ease by night.

It is, indeed, gratifying to contemplate the change that has lately taken place in the whole system of *the road* ; and it is a most *humane one*. The old-fashioned coachman to a heavy coach—and they were all heavy down to very recent times—bore some analogy with the prize-fighter, for he stood highest who could hit hardest. He was generally a man of large frame, made larger by indulgence, and of great bodily power—which was useful to him. To the button-hole of his coat were appended several whipcord points, which he was sure to have occasion for on the road, for his horses were whipped till whipping was as necessary to them as their harness. In fair play to him, however, he was not solely answerable for this : the spirit of his cattle was broken by the task they were called to perform—for in those days twenty-mile stages were in fashion ;—and what was the consequence ? Why, the four-horse whip and the Nottingham whipcord were of no avail over the latter part of the ground, and something like a cat-o’-nine-tails was produced out of the boot, which was jocularly called ‘the apprentice’ ; and a shrewd apprentice it was to the art of torturing, which was inflicted on the wheelers without stint or measure, but without which the coach might have been often left on the road. One circumstance alone saved these horses from destruction ; this was the frequency of alehouses on the

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road, not one of which could then be passed without a call.

Still our old-fashioned coachman was a scientific man in his calling—more so, perhaps, than by far the greater part of his brethren of the present day, in as much as his energies and skill were more frequently put to the test. He had heavy loads, bad roads, and weary horses to deal with, neither was any part of his harness to be depended on, upon a pinch. Then the box he sat upon was worse than Pandora’s, with all the evils it contained, for even *hope* appeared to have deserted it. It rested on the bed of the axletree, and shook the frame to atoms ; but when prayers were put up to have it altered, the proprietors said, ‘ No ; the rascal will always be asleep if we place his box on the springs.’ If, among all these difficulties, then, he by degrees became a drunkard, who can wonder at his becoming so ? But he was *a coachman*. He could fetch the last ounce out of a wheel-horse by the use of his double thong, or his *apprentice*, and the point of his lash told terribly upon his leaders. He likewise applied it scientifically ; it was directed under the bar to the flank, and after the third hit he brought it up to his hand by *the draw*, so that it never got entangled in the pole-chains, or in any part of the harness. He could untie a knot with his teeth and tie another with his tongue, as well as he could with his hands ; and if his thong broke off in the middle, he could splice it with dexterity, and even with neatness, as his coach was proceeding on its journey. In short, he could do what coachmen of the present day

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cannot do, because they have not been called upon to do it ; and he likewise could do what they never try to do—namely, he could drive when he was drunk nearly as well as when he was sober. He was very frequently a faithful servant to his employers ; considered trustworthy by bankers and others in the country through which he passed ; and as humane to his horses, perhaps, as the adverse circumstances he was placed in by his masters would admit.

It has been suggested to road surveyors, that, if they would leave a narrow slip of loose gravel on the near side of severe hills, or those of only moderate declivity where the fall is a long one, and the road hard, it would save innumerable accidents in the course of the year, as the moment a coachman found his coach was getting the better of the horses—or should any part of his tackle give way—he could run her into the gravel, and her velocity would be almost instantly checked. If placed on the near or left-hand side of the road, it would not inconvenience carriages *ascending* the hills ; and the attention of a labourer, about every third day, to keep the gravel in its place, would obviate every difficulty. Likewise, it is desirable that roads should be raised a little to meet a coach, as it were, in the turns, especially such as are at the bottom of a hill. For example, if the turn is to the right, the left side of the road should be the higher, so as to give support to a coach in preserving her centre of gravity. Be it remembered, that if the body of a coach could be made to lock *with the carriage*, she would go round a corner at full speed without danger ; but as

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that cannot be done, too much precaution cannot be used when turning her from her line. Only a few years back, the Kingston and Worcester mail was upset in going round a turn, where the road was in an opposite form to the one we have just pointed out, when, according to evidence produced, she was going at the rate of only six miles in the hour. The effects of this accident were dreadful. In one respect, however, roads are more safe than they were, being no longer rounded in the middle, which caused the overthrow of many coaches in the act of crossing them, and the ruin of many coach-horses, by straining them in the fetlock-joint.

The hills on our great roads are now so cut through, that coaches ascend nearly all of them in the trot. Indeed, coachmen have found out that their horses are gainers here, as in the trot every horse does his share ; whereas very few teams are all at work together when walking. Four weak horses, well put together, will draw *a very heavy load* up a hill of considerable acclivity, if the surface be hard, and they are kept to a trot. As a mechanical agent, the worst method in which the strength of a horse can be applied is carrying a weight up hill ; and the best, that of drawing it. We should, however, give him every advantage ; and, with a loaded coach, ‘keeping her alive,’ as coachmen translate the *vis vivida* of the mechanic, is of vast importance in the draught of her.

We have now only one more hint to offer as to stage-coaches. Proprietors should never, if they can avoid it,

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suffer two coachmen to drive the same horses ; either each man should drive his own ground double, or he should go the journey throughout and return the next day. It cannot be expected that horses can do well in the hands of two coachmen, even allowing them equal merits ; and for these plain reasons :—they not only feel the effect of change of hands, which ruffles them, but they know not what to be at in their work ; one man makes his play, as it is called, over one part of the ground, the other over another part. The system also destroys the pride a coachman takes in seeing his stock look well ; and, if anything goes wrong, a wrangle is sure to be the consequence. As it is ascertained that no horse can run *at the top of his speed* more than seven or eight miles without injury, it is much better that a coachman should work his ground double—this is, with the same team down and up—if the hour suits, than that another man should touch them.¹

Some persons object to two sweats a day, but it is nonsense ; how does the race-horse run his heats ? and how many sweats does a roadster or a hunter get on the same day ? In very fast work, it is better for cattle to run five miles *in and out*, with an hour or two of rest between being taken from one coach and put to the other, than nine miles straight on end.

A wonderful change has taken place in the English

¹ So material, indeed, is this point considered by one of our best judges of road coach-work, that he denies the possibility of any coach keeping its exact time over a long distance of ground, unless each man drives his own horses, with short stages for each team.

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coach-horse, as well as the sort of horses put into other kinds of harness ; but this has been progressive. Fifty years ago, the idea of putting a thorough-bred horse into harness would have been considered preposterous. In the carriages of our noblemen and gentlemen, the long-tailed black, or Cleveland bay—each one remove from the cart-horse—was the prevailing sort, and six miles an hour the extent of his pace ; and he cost from thirty pounds to fifty pounds. A few years back, a nobleman gave seven hundred guineas for a horse to draw his cabriolet : two hundred guineas is now an every-day price for a horse of this description, and a hundred and fifty for a gentleman’s coach-horse ! Indeed, a pair of handsome coach-horses, fit for London, and well broken and bitted, cannot be purchased *under* two hundred guineas ; and even job-masters often give much more for them to let out to their customers. In harness, also, we think we have arrived at perfection, to which the invention of the patent shining leather has mainly contributed. A handsome horse, well harnessed, is a noble sight ; and is it not extraordinary that in no country but England is the art of putting horses into harness generally understood ? Independently of the workmanship of the harness-maker, if our road-horses were put to their coaches in the loose awkward fashion of the Continent, we could never travel at the rate we do. It is the command given over the coach-horse that *alone* enables us to do it.

We may as well say a word or two as to private vehicles ere we close. As a facsimile of the gentleman’s family-

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coach of fifty years back is now become difficult to produce, we will describe it. It had a most comfortable and roomy body, quite fit to contain six portly persons, and suspended by long leather braces, affixed to nearly upright springs. To enable the body to hang low, the perch of a bent form, called the compass perch, was used ; and the carriage was of great length and strength. In fact, it was, coachman and all, in strict accordance with the animals that drew it, and came under the denomination of 'slow and easy.' The fashionable open carriage of this day was a still more unsightly object—the high, single-bodied phaeton, all upon the fore-wheels, and looking as if the hinder ones had nothing to do but to follow. This was the favourite carriage of the late King, when Prince of Wales, and was commonly driven, by such as could afford it, with four horses in hand. Indeed, it may almost be said to have given birth to our gentleman-coachmanship, as well as to the well-known doggerel epigram :—

‘ What can Tommy Onslow do ?
He can drive a phaeton and two.
Can Tommy Onslow do no more ?
Yes—he can drive a phaeton and four ! ’

The phaeton was succeeded by the no less classically yclept curricle—a carriage, when properly appointed, and followed by two well-dressed and well-mounted grooms, of singular elegance certainly. It had a long run in the fashionable world ; but being, like the phaeton, only calculated to carry two persons, and requiring never less than three



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"HE CAN DRIVE A PHAETON AND TWO."

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horses, taxation and economy put an end to it. Then came the reign of the gig. The curate’s wife, a gouty attorney, or a rich old farmer, fifty years ago, might be seen boxed up in a whiskey, which, being hung on hind- and fore-braces, with a head to protect its inmates from weather, made a convenient family conveyance, and—with a steady dobbin to draw it—a safe one. Economy induced a leader of *ton* to cast favouring eyes on this snug whiskey ; and thence the airy gig, which, with a hundred-guinea horse in it, has been the best friend to doctors and undertakers they have ever yet found. The race has multiplied, and many names and varieties have been adopted in succession. The quiet movement of their wheels, the nice equilibrium in which they are placed on the axle, the evenness of their motion by reason of their being detached from their shafts, and the ease with which they follow the horse, make gigs delightful carriages to ride in, and we could wish they were not so dangerous. The stanhope, so named after the Honourable Fitzroy Stanhope, who planned it, succeeded the tilbury, so called from the well-known coach-maker ; and the cost, without harness, of either may be about seventy pounds. Now, ‘ every dog has his day,’ and so have our prevailing fashions. The buggy, stanhope, dennet, and tilbury, have all, during some seasons past, been supplanted by the cabriolet for town work, for which we must allow it is far more suitable—though much too heavy for the road. In London, this has been seen at the opera, at the theatres, at the club-houses, and at dinner-parties, with a neat little urchin on

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the foot-board, performing all the offices of the chariot with not a third of its expenses. The English cabriolet, however, is rather on the decline in the fashionable world, and the light and airy tilbury is making its appearance again.

For country work nearly all these open vehicles have given place to the double-bodied phaeton and the britscka, both of which are much used in travelling post. The former is likewise in vogue with citizens and others who have families, and is now made so light as to be drawn by one horse with four persons in it with ease, for a limited number of miles. Descending still lower in the scale, and only one remove from the donkey-cart, is what is called the pony-chaise, out of which more people have been killed than we should like to enumerate here. These vehicles, by far the most dangerous carriages of the whole family they belong to, are so light that an animal even of little power can do what he pleases with them ; they are also obliged to be made so short in the carriage, that the least thing upsets them, while the persons in them are not out of reach of heels. Should the animal be alarmed and endeavour to run away, the lowness and lightness of the vehicle nearly destroy all power of resistance ; indeed, if he have much power, a carriage of this description may be compared to a canister tied to a dog's tail.¹

¹ Accidents by these carriages frequently arise from apparently an unknown cause ; it is by no means generally known that horses frequently begin kicking or plunging in consequence of some part of their harness pinching them, but which their drivers are quite unconscious of at the time. Thus

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The taste for the whip has undoubtedly declined ; and at one time, perhaps, it occupied more attention among the higher classes of society than we ever wish to see it do again. Yet, taken in moderation, we can perceive no reason to condemn this branch of sport more than others. If so great a personage as Sophocles could think it fitting to display his science in public, in the trifling game of ball, why may not an English gentleman exercise his skill on a coach-box ? If the Athenians, the most polished nation of all antiquity, deemed it an honour to be considered skilful charioteers, why should Englishmen consider it a disgrace ? To be serious—our amateur or gentlemen-coachmen have done much good : the road would never have been what it now is, but for the encouragement they gave, by their notice and support, to all persons connected with it. Would the Holy-head road have been what it is, had there been no such persons as the Hon. Thomas Kenyon, Sir Henry Parnell, and Mr. Maddox ? Would the Oxford coachmen have set so good an example as they have done to their brethren of ‘ the bench,’ had there been no such men on their road as Sir Henry Peyton, Lord Clonmell, the late Sir Thomas Mostyn, that Nestor of coachmen, Mr. Annesley, and the

a coach-horse is frequently set kicking by merely a twist in his trace. Many accidents, however, arise from using horses not properly broken to harness, as well as from the inexperience of drivers. We have all heard of the young Oxonian, who prevailed on his uncle to accompany him in his gig to Oxford. In passing through Kensington, the old gentleman observed he had paid his nephew a great compliment, for that was only the fifth time he had ever been in a gig in his life. The nephew replied that his horse beat him hollow, for he had never been in one at all before that day !

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late Mr. Harrison of Shelswell ?¹ Would not the unhappy coachmen of five-and-twenty years back have gone on, wearing out their breeches with the bumping of the old coach-box, and their stomachs with brandy, had not Mr. Ward of Squerries, after many a weary endeavour, persuaded the proprietors to place their boxes upon springs—the plan for accomplishing which was suggested by Mr. Roberts,

¹ 'Mr. Charles Holmes and the Blenheim Coach.—"Nimrod," in his Northern Tour last month, got upon his favourite subject, the road; and we were glad to see it, because we think occasional notices of the different coachmen, and the turns-out from the various establishments, are calculated to afford an additional stimulus to all persons of the same class, and also to promote the public service in the coaching department. We have much pleasure, therefore, in recording a very handsome and flattering compliment that has been recently paid to Mr. Charles Holmes, the driver and part proprietor of the Blenheim coach (from Woodstock to London), to celebrate the completion of his twentieth year on that well-appointed coach, a period that has elapsed without a single accident to his coach, his passengers, or himself, and during which time, with the exception of a very short absence from indisposition, he has driven his sixty-five miles every day, making somewhere about twenty-three thousand miles a year. The numerous patrons of the coach entered into a subscription to present him with a piece of plate; and accordingly a beautiful cup, bearing the shape of an antique vase, and cover, ornamented with rich handles, composed of scrolls and foliage, the cover surmounted by a beautifully modelled horse, with a coach and four horses on one side, and a suitable inscription on the other, was presented to Mr. Holmes by that staunch patron of the road, Sir Henry Peyton, Bart., in August last, at a dinner at the Thatched House Tavern, St. James's Street, to which between forty and fifty gentlemen sat down. The cup was manufactured by Messrs. Green and Ward, and the list of subscribers amounted to upwards of two hundred and fifty, including amongst others the Duke of Wellington, and indeed all persons of rank, business, or pleasure, whose vocations call them in the direction that the coach travels. We see by *'Bell's Life in London'*, a paper that has uniformly devoted itself to the patronage of this useful class of men, that a handsome salver is yet to be presented to this fortunate and deserving coachman, at Oxford. We feel assured that this flattering distinction will have its due influence in all parts of the country, and we wish Mr. Holmes many years of health and prosperity to enjoy the reward of his long and meritorious services.'—(Extract from the *'New Sporting Magazine'* for November 1835, p. 68.)

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nephew to the then proprietor of the White Horse, Fetter Lane, London, but now of the Royal Hotel, Calais ? What would the Devonshire road have been, but for the late Sir Charles Bamfylde, Sir John Rogers, Colonel Prouse, Sir Lawrence Palk, and others ? Have the advice and the practice of such experienced men as Mr. Charles Buxton, Mr. Henry Villebois, Mr. Okeover, Sir Bellingham Graham, Mr. John Walker, Lord Sefton, Sir Felix Agar,¹ Mr. Ackers, Mr. Maxse, Hon. Fitzroy Stanhope, Colonel Spicer, Colonel Sibthorpe, *cum multis aliis*, been thrown away upon persons who have looked up to them as protectors ? Certainly not : neither would the improvement in carriages—stage-coaches more especially—have arrived at its present height, but for the attention and suggestions of such persons as we have been speaking of.

Gentlemen-coaching, however, has, as we said, received a check ; and in more ways than one. ‘ Tampering with the currency,’ and low prices, have taken off the leaders ; and the bars and four-horse whips are hung up for the present—very few four-in-hands being visible.² The ‘ B.D.C.,’ or Benson Driving Club, which still holds its rendezvous at the ‘ Black Dog,’ Bedfont, is the only survivor of those

¹ Perhaps one of the finest specimens of good coachmanship was performed by Sir Felix Agar. He made a bet, which he won, that he would drive his own four-horses-in-hand up Grosvenor Place, down the passage, into Tattersalls’ Yard, around the pillar, which stands in the centre of it, and back again into Grosvenor Place, *without either of his horses going in a slower pace than a trot*.

² Only ten years back, there were from thirty to forty four-in-hand equi-pages to be seen constantly about town :—*one* is stared at now !

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numerous driving associations whose processions used, some twenty years ago, to be among the most imposing, as well as peculiar, spectacles in and about the metropolis.

The fashion, however, was not one of venerable standing among us—gentlemen-coachmen not having been known in England for more than about half a century. We believe we ourselves remember the Anglo-Erichthonius—the late Hon. Charles Finch, brother to the late Earl of Aylesford, who used to drive his own coach-and-four, disguised in a livery great coat. Soon after his *début*, however, the celebrated ‘Tommy Onslow,’ Sir John Lade, and others, mounted the box in their own character. Sir John was esteemed a renowned judge of coach-horses and carriages, and a good coachman of the old school ; but everything connected with the coach-box has undergone such a change in the last twenty-five years, that the Nestors of the art are no longer to be quoted. Mr. Warde, *the father of the field*, may now, we believe, be called *the father of the road* also ; and if the old heavy Gloucester ‘six insides, and sixteen out, with two tons of luggage,’ were to reappear on the road, no man’s advice would be better than his.

Count Pecchio, whose little volume on England lately appeared, has a luculent chapter on the astonishing convenience of our public conveyances, and the finished elegance of our private ones. We hardly, indeed, know which of the two things is more likely to strike the imagination of a foreigner, no matter from what part of the world he may

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come. Any one who has been accustomed to admire the muster of vehicles at the Tuilleries, must indeed open his eyes wide the first time he is in St. James’s Street on the day of a levee or drawing-room. Hyde Park, however, on any fine afternoon, in the height of the London season, will be more than enough to confound him. He will there see what no other country under the heavens can show him, and what is more, we may venture to add, what no other country ever will show him. Let him only sit on the rail near our Great Captain’s statue, with his watch in his hand, and in the space of two hours he will see a thousand well-appointed equipages pass before him to the Mall, in all the pomp of aristocratic pride, and in which the very horses themselves appear to partake. Everything he sees is peculiar :—the silent roll and easy motion of the London-built carriage—the *style* of the coachmen ; it is hard to determine which shine brightest, the lace on their clothes, their own round faces, or their flaxen wigs ; the pipe-clayed reins—pipe-clayed lest they should soil the clean white gloves ; the gigantic young fellows, in huge cocked-hats bedaubed with lace, in laced silk stockings, new kid gloves, and with gold-headed canes, who tower above ‘Mr. Coachman’s’ head ; not forgetting the spotted coach-dog, which has just been washed for the occasion. The *vis-à-vis*, containing nobody but a single fair dame, with all its *set-out*, has cost at least a thousand pounds ; and the stream of equipages of all calibres—barouches, chariots, cabriolets, etc., almost all got up, as Mr. Robin’s advertisements say, ‘regardless of

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expense,'¹ flows on unbroken, until it is half-past seven, and people at last must begin to think of what they still call *dinner*. Old Seneca tells us such a blaze of splendour was once to be seen on the Appian Way. It might be so : it is now to be seen nowhere but in London.

¹ Already, however, like all other trades, coach-making is on the wane. Two years back, the town-coach could not be had under four hundred guineas. Three hundred is the price now. The travelling-chariot, with everything complete, could not be purchased under three hundred and eighty guineas ; three hundred will now suffice. The town-cabriolet with patent boxes to the wheels, commenced at a hundred and fifty guineas, a hundred and twenty is now the figure ; and so with all the rest of the tribe.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BAG FOX

THE Noble Earl of an ancient name was a Cabinet Minister who flourished less than a hundred years ago, and was wont every now and then to leave his portfolio in London and refresh his mind and body with a gallop after his own pack of Hounds over the Vale of Aylesbury. As he could only hunt occasionally he left nothing to chance, and therefore found it convenient not to limit himself to one kind of game, so he kept a pack of Hounds who would hunt anything ; and further than that, in order to make a certainty of a find he would always have a bag fox ready to his hand. Legend has it that one or more foxes—we cannot give a fox kept in captivity the compliment of a capital F, which we accord to the wild Fox—were imprisoned in a pit somewhere near Tring, and duly kept in condition by being exercised by the man with the big birch broom. An affair with one of these foxes is duly described in humorous verse by an unknown author, who, from the tragedy of drawing for a hare for two hours without success, passes to the comedy of turning down the fox and the excitement of his narrow escape ; works up to the anti-climax of digging him out alive, and tells of his safe conduct

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to Tring together with the Earl and his Hounds and the whole retinue.

Now all this is extremely funny, and a hunt after a bag fox may be forgiven if it is simply regarded as a stimulant to the liver of a Cabinet Minister. But no one would dignify such a pursuit with the name of Sport. To hunt any animal whom you have had in your hand is not Sport. It is an amusement, a pastime. Huntsmen will tell you that to hunt even a wild Fox who has been bolted from an earth or drain either at the beginning or at any other period of a run gives them no thrill. It may give a lot of pleasure to the ladies and gentlemen, but it is not Fox-hunting. If, indeed, you mark a Fox to ground, and he escapes you when you are trying to kill him, then the instinct of pursuit is unbroken, and you hunt him with as great zest after he has bolted as you did before. One morning there was a very hard frost, and the master was induced to put his Hounds into a wood to try to find and to kill an old Fox who was said to have taken more chickens in one village than probably existed in the whole of the county. The bitch pack was out. They found at once and, after a fine cry twice or thrice round the wood, marked him to ground in a drain one field from the covert. ‘Now we will eat him and then go home,’ said the master, to the huge delight of the foot people who had all seen the Fox, and of course could swear to him among a thousand as being the terror of the hen-roosts. But the sanguine master had reckoned without his Fox. The animal had too much sense to stop in the drain, and took the only



"KEEP A CONDITION BY RE-EXECUTED IN THE MAX WITH THE PIG GIGE" 1900

The Bag Fox

alternative risk and jumped out apparently into the very mouths of the pack. The horn was at the lips of the master ready to sound the death-call, when the old Fox, keeping his head in crucial moments as only a Fox and a rat know how to keep it, dived under one Hound, jumped over the back of a second, saved himself by showing his fine old teeth to a third, and was away before you could say knife. Back through the wood he flew, and set his head for the open. He was not seen again for eight long miles, when the bitches ran into him in the middle of a large grass field. Now in this run the satisfaction of the kill was not one bit diminished by his having been in the drain. He was given no law. His enemies were not trying to nurse him, but were trying all the time to kill him. The animus of the pursuit was sustained from the very moment he was found. If the Hounds had been withdrawn from the drain, and the Fox bolted and given a chance, there would still have been a run, but it would not have been the real thing. Still less would the illusion have succeeded if a bag had been used. The use of the bag in any shape or form destroys all the romance and spirit of Fox-hunting, and the verse we here present is introduced because it satirises and ridicules a practice which is wholly out of tune with the Sport of our Ancestors.

Yet the curious thing is that the bag was once used quite seriously in the west country by two masters of Foxhounds whose names stand very high in the lists of sportsmen. Sir Walter Carew and the Rev. John Russell both hunted

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bag foxes, and in the Devonshire of 1826 the practice grew up of saving the Fox alive in front of the Hounds—though how this desperate deed was done is not recorded—and keeping him on a long chain in a yard, to be there exercised by a groom with a driving whip until he was wanted for the next day's hunting. We always thought that the old Devonshire men like Sir Walter Carew and Parson Russell were sportsmen of the most conservative and orthodox type. How their consciences yielded to treatment to the extent of allowing them to hunt foxes from a bag is difficult to imagine. As an amusement for officers in India, who literally cannot get a gallop in any other way, or as part of the amenities of a French health resort within reach of the Pyrenees, the thing is intelligible. If it becomes the fashion in England, the curtain will have been rung down upon the Sport of our Ancestors.

THE NOBLE EARL OF AN ANCIENT NAME

A noble Earl of an ancient name
Hunted the Fox, but preferred him tame,
Though his sire was as bold a sportsman free
As ever rode over a grass 'countree.'
His sire would mount on his high-bred horse
And view the wild Fox from the hillside gorse,
But his son would come down by a second-class train,
Worry a bagman, and—go home again !

The Bag Fox

'Tis half-past twelve by the railway clocks,
And the Earl has just called for his horse and his Fox ;
After the Earl there rides the Earl's groom
And then comes a man with a big birch broom,¹
Clad in the Earl's discarded breeches,
To tickle him up when he comes to the ditches.

The Earl's admirers are ranged in Brown's yard ;
They all wear top-boots and mean to ride hard ;
Whether bold dog Fox, or timid hare,
Their game to-day, they none of them care ;
So 'twas well that the Earl had brought his Fox
Safely wrapped up in a little deal box.

For two hours or more they drew for a hare,
But all in vain, all was blank despair ;
Then said the Earl to the elder Brown,
' Open the box, and turn him down ! '

So they turned him down in the Aylesbury Vale,
In front of a fence called a post and rail,
To suit the views of a certain ' gent,'
Who ' rather liked timber,' and thought he ' went.'

Over the rails the first to fly
Was the ' gent ' of course, but the Fox was shy,
And would have declined, but the Earl and his groom
And the Huntsman and Whips, and the man with the broom,
And the Browns, Sam and John, and two boys from a cart,
Would not hear of his shirking, but drove him along !

¹ Tradition says that the Earl kept his bag foxes in a pit, where they were exercised by a man with a broom.

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A pleasant line the captive took,
Shirking the doubles and avoiding the brook,
For as you may imagine, he went by rule,
Only taking the leaps that he learnt at school.

Three hounds of Baron Rothschild's breed,
Matchless in courage, strength, and speed,
Fast on his flying footsteps came,
And all but won the desperate game :
But just as the Earl was about to sound
The dread Who-whoop ! he went to ground !!

So they dug him out, and the Earl and his groom
And the Huntsman and Whips, and the man with the broom,
And the Fox and the Hounds are at Tring again,
And the Earl 's gone to town by the five o'clock train.

CHAPTER IX

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

AMONG the authors who are presented in this volume, Anthony Trollope is the only one who has had the distinction of being mentioned by Mr. Gosse in his well-known book on English Literature. Mr. Gosse, writing in 1903, in his preface to the fourth volume of his work, says that 'the age through which we have just passed is still too close to us to enable us to decide with any confidence which, among the many names which were prominent in the second rank of its literature, will continue to interest posterity.' He foreshadows some alterations and extensions in future editions of this volume. One is sorry but not altogether surprised that Whyte Melville is left out, but one wonders whether some day Mr. Gosse will recognise the author of '*Handley Cross*,' who as the years go by seems to stand out more clearly than many of his contemporaries.

Anthony Trollope was born in 1815 and died in 1882. The Trollope family between them produced a number of books, both his mother and his brother being industrious writers. But it is with Anthony that we are concerned, not only because he both loved and understood Fox-hunting, but because he has faithfully, almost meticulously, preserved for us the social life of our ancestors in the mid-Victorian

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era. He never invented any great plots, or dealt in anything sensational, unless it were the mild sensation of the forgery in *Orley Farm*; rather than a creator he was an accurate limner of the manners and customs of the day as interpreted by stodgy, commonplace sort of people. He was himself a post-office official whose duties caused him to travel a great deal in the provinces, and there he must have acquired much material for his intimate and amusing accounts of the people who lived in the country, and above all in the country towns. He seems to have been guided by an unerring instinct where his experience might have been at fault. He knew his way about the intricacies of courtesy titles a great deal better than some writers who deal in high rank. Indeed, it was said of him by *Jehu Junior* in the '*Vanity Fair*' of the day that he was never known to commit a solecism.

But in addition to his half-cynical, half-good-natured pictures of crinoline England, he excelled in his understanding of two things. The one was the difference between a Tory and a Whig, the other was Fox-hunting. The difference in political temperaments appears all through '*The Warden*' and its sequel, '*Barchester Towers*', the two novels which first began to make him famous. They were published in 1855 and 1857 respectively. In the opinion of many of his readers they are the best that he wrote, '*Barchester Towers*' probably being his masterpiece.

The dominant figure in both books is really Archdeacon Grantly, the high-and-dry Tory Churchman who was pre-

Anthony Trollope

pared to go to any lengths to preserve the Constitution in Church and State, and especially the emoluments and property of the Establishment. ‘He did not believe in the Gospel with more assurance than he did in the sacred justice of all Ecclesiastical revenues.’ In ‘*The Warden*’ his antagonist is John Bold the Reformer, who was rash enough to institute an inquiry into the income of Hiram’s hospital, and in ‘*Barchester Towers*’ he wins a pitched battle against Mrs. Proudie, the Whig wife of the Whig Bishop, and her occasional ally, the odious Low Church Radical in the person of the Rev. Obadiah Slope, the Bishop’s Chaplain. Mrs. Proudie was prepared to make use of Mr. Slope provided he kept his place, and was docile and obedient. But as soon as he ‘got his head out’ and actually had the presumption to apply for the Deanery of Barchester, the Whig lady turned upon him. ‘Mrs. Proudie considered herself in politics a pure Whig. All her family belonged to the Whig Party. Now, among all ranks of Englishmen and Englishwomen . . . no one is so hostile to lowly-born pretenders to high station as the pure Whig.’ ‘Dean of Barchester,’ shrieked the Bishopess. ‘I suppose he ’ll be looking for a bishopric some of these days—a man that hardly knows who his own father was ; a man whom I found without bread to his mouth, or a coat to his back ! Dean of Barchester indeed ! I ’ll dean him.’

All this is not quite relevant to the Sport of our Ancestors, but no student of Trollope can think of him without recalling the character - drawing in ‘*Barchester Towers*,’ which

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enables us to see some of our ancestors, if not their sport, as this humorous and acute observer himself saw them. But we will pass on to '*The American Senator*,' published twenty years later.

The American Senator was one Mr. Elias Gotobed, the Senator for Mickewa. He had 'very advanced opinions of his own respecting government, liberty, and public institutions in general.' Such was the man whom John Morton, the Squire of Bragton, known as 'the Paragon,' had for his guest when the Ufford and Rufford Hounds met close to Bragton on the site of the Old Kennels. John Morton was no Fox-hunter, but had just returned from his post as Secretary of Legation at Washington, bringing with him the American Senator, whom he proposed to entertain by taking him out hunting on wheels. Trollope had spent some time in America, so he thoroughly understood the point of view of such a one as Mr. Gotobed. He also thoroughly understood all the technique and psychology of the hunting-field. Therefore the extracts from his book that we have chosen bear the hall-mark of authority, and are written with a certainty of touch that is the particular property of those who know their subject. He was himself devoted to Fox-hunting, and his custom was to rise very early, write no more and no less than a certain prescribed number of words of the book on which he was then engaged, meet a pack of Fox-hounds within reach of London, return to his literary work, and before going to bed, write the exact number of words he had allotted to himself for his evening task. It sounds

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rather mechanical. Other authors may, however, have done something of the sort and not have disclosed their method. Trollope gave it away in his autobiography, and according to Mr. Gosse, suffered somewhat in popularity as a consequence of his honesty. But however unromantic his method, he never makes a mistake in writing about Fox-hunting. He brings in sundry days' sport in more than one of his books, and wrote eight hunting sketches for '*The Pall Mall Gazette*,' which were printed in a volume by themselves in 1865. All the sketches are well informed. There is nothing much in them about Hounds, except some very sound pieces of advice in his paper on 'How to ride to Hounds.' He advises the would-be rider to Hounds not to ride to points, but to keep his eye on the leading Hound, and turn when he turns. Never to ride behind the Hounds, but alongside them is another golden rule insisted on by Trollope. Any one, he says, can ride among the Hounds on a bad scenting day. At such times he advises his pupil to retire somewhat from the crowd, and 'give place to those eager men who are breaking the huntsman's heart.' This is the bitter cry of the true sportsman, and shows more feeling than do many of his novels.

And what could be better than his final paragraph ? He was evidently writing of something that he loved better than Cathedral Closes and overpaid Wardens. Here it is :—

' Not behind hounds, but alongside of them,—if only you can achieve such position,—it should be your honour and glory to place yourself ; and you should go so far wide of them as in no

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way to impede them or disturb them, or even to remind them of your presence. If thus you live with them, turning as they turn, but never turning among them, keeping your distance, but losing no yard, and can do this for seven miles over a grass country in forty-five minutes, then you can ride to hounds better than nineteen men out of every twenty that you have seen at the meet, and will have enjoyed the keenest pleasure that hunting, or perhaps, I may say, that any other amusement, can give you.'

These chapters from '*The American Senator*' are chosen because they set forth in a few touches, but with unerring precision, almost every point of view from which Fox-hunting can be regarded. There is Lord Rufford, who really ought to have been the M.F.H. himself, but who was probably too idle and easy-going to face the responsibility: a backwoodsman with much more money than brains, who would have been as likely to have wandered into the House of Commons by mistake as to have found his way into the House of Lords, should he have turned to Westminster Palace for a new sensation, as the sated gourmet turned to boiled mutton and sago pudding. Devoted to hunting and shooting, but not prepared to do any spade work for either, he allows Captain Glomax, the carpet-bagger, to come down to his own country of Rufford, and take the place that should be his. Captain Glomax was not to the manner born, but compelled by sheer love of Foxhounds to be their master, and to spend his money on keeping and breeding them. Fox-hunting has always produced, and will continue to produce, men like Captain Glomax, ready and anxious to face all the wear and tear of mastership in return for

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the charm that they find in the service of the ruling passion.

Anthony Trollope hunted in Essex among other countries. If he had lived long enough to see James Bailey hunting Hounds we should undoubtedly have said that Bailey was the prototype of Tony Tuppett. Here you have a faithful portrait, not a caricature, of the long-service provincial huntsman, not so lean or so brilliant as a Tom Firr, but one who hammers away at his Foxes, is not above saving a fall by 'going round by Shuffler's Bottom,' and is an institution popular with every one. Then we have a gallery containing types of the men who are the backbone of Fox-hunting and of much else besides, many of them having a hereditary interest in the welfare of their country and the Sport of their Ancestors. Mr. Runciman, the landlord of 'The Bush' at Dillsborough ; Ned Botsey, the local brewer ; Harry Stubbings, who let out hunters and rode steeplechases ; and last but not least, 'Larry' Twentyman, the gallant yeoman, who had inherited from his forefathers three hundred acres of land, and hunted in a red coat. It is to be expected that the new yeoman class now created by the tenants who have purchased their holdings will furnish many Twentymans in the future. They are the best of friends to Fox-hunting, and are a class more essentially English than any other that the British Isles can produce. So long as they flourish, Fox-hunting is safe. Closely linked to them are the professional men in the country towns. It will be bad policy if the high tariff that Hunt Committees are now charging is

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enforced so rigidly as to prevent these men from enjoying an occasional day's hunting. Trollope knew them all intimately. In an earlier chapter he exhibits their salutary prejudices with a true sense of comedy. The man Goarly owned some land on the edge of Dillsborough Wood, the property of Lord Rufford, and actually proposed to institute a suit against that nobleman for damage done to crops by his lordship's pheasants. Moreover, he had the effrontery to propose himself as a client to Mr. Masters, the attorney, whose daughter Larry Twentyman wanted to marry. 'The man is an utter blackguard,' said Larry. 'Last year he threatened to shoot the foxes in Dillsborough Wood.' 'No!' said Kate Masters, quite horrified. As a result of this conversation, together with much pressure from a convivial conclave of the Dillsborough Club in the back parlour of 'The Bush,' Mr. Masters had thought it wise to abandon the case of Goarly.

We have met Goarlys here and there. Their bark is worse than their bite. They are irritating in small ways. For instance, there is no surer way of irritating Fox-hunters than by appearing with a gun when the Hounds are out. How Goarly drew them all by doing this, and how he enlisted the wrong-headed sympathy of the American Senator, is good to read.

But perhaps the most amusing passages are those which tell how poor John Morton, by no means an expert, was worried all day by having to find answers to the half-hostile, half-plausible drift of the American Senator's questions

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about Fox-hunting. Of all things in this world, Fox-hunting is the most difficult thing to explain to those who know nothing about it. Mr. Gotobed had set himself the impossible task of coming over to England to find out all about the British Constitution, and British country life. Civilisation has not given birth to anything more stuffed with anomalies than are these two institutions. Many people here might be concerned with either or both of them for a life-time without rightly understanding them. The American Senator tried to understand them in a few weeks, and took a very heavy fall. In view of our closer contact with certain aspects of American thought and feeling, the book is well worth reading to-day. But apart from international politics, it should certainly be read by all those who wish to study the influences that are at work upon the Sport of our Ancestors.

THE OLD KENNELS

On the Saturday morning the hounds met at the 'Old Kennels,' as the meet was always called, and here was an excellent opportunity of showing to Mr. Gotobed one of the great institutions of the country. It was close to the house, and therefore could be reached without any trouble, and as it was held on Morton's own ground, he could do more towards making his visitor understand the thing than might have been possible elsewhere. When the hounds

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moved, the carriage would be ready to take them about the roads, and show them as much as could be seen on wheels.

Punctually at eleven John Morton and his American guest were on the bridge, and Tony Tuppett was already occupying his wonted place, seated on a strong grey mare that had done a great deal of work, but would live—as Tony used to say—to do a great deal more. Round him the hounds were clustered—twenty-three couples in all—some seated on their haunches, some standing obediently still, while a few moved about restlessly, subject to the voices, and on one or two occasions to a gentle administration of thong from the attendant whips. Four or five horsemen were clustering round, most of them farmers, and were talking to Tony. Our friend, Mr. Twentyman, was the only man in a red coat who had yet arrived, and with him, on her brown pony, was Kate Masters, who was listening with all her ears to every word that Tony said.

‘That, I guess, is the Captain you spoke of,’ said the Senator, pointing to Tony Tuppett.

‘Oh no ;—that’s the huntsman. Those three men in caps are the servants who do the work.’

‘The dogs can’t be brought out without servants to mind them ! They’re what you call gamekeepers.’ Morton was explaining that the men were not gamekeepers when Captain Glomax himself arrived, driving a tandem. There was no road up to the spot, but on hunt mornings—or at any rate when the meet was at the Old Kennels—the park gates were open so that the vehicles could come up on the green sward.

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‘That’s Captain Glomax, I suppose,’ said Morton. ‘I don’t know him, but from the way he’s talking to the huntsman you may be sure of it.’

‘He is the great man, is he? All these dogs belong to him?’

‘Either to him or the hunt.’

‘And he pays for those servants?’

‘Certainly.’

‘He is a very rich man, I suppose.’ Then Mr. Morton endeavoured to explain the position of Captain Glomax. He was not rich. He was no one in particular—except that he was Captain Glomax; and his one attribute was a knowledge of hunting. He didn’t keep the ‘dogs’ out of his own pocket. He received £2000 a year from the gentlemen of the county, and he himself paid anything which the hounds and horses might cost over that. ‘He’s a sort of upper servant, then?’ asked the Senator.

‘Not at all. He’s the greatest man in the county on hunting days.’

‘Does he live out of it?’

‘I should think not.’

‘It’s a deal of trouble, isn’t it?’

‘Full work for an active man’s time, I should say.’ A great many more questions were asked and answered, at the end of which the Senator declared that he did not quite understand it, but as far as he saw he did not think much of Captain Glomax.

‘If he could make a living out of it I should respect

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him,' said the Senator ;—‘ though it ’s like knife-grinding or handling arsenic—an unwholesome sort of profession.’

‘ I think they look very nice,’ said Morton, as one or two well-turned-out young men rode up to the place.

‘ They seem to me to have thought more about their breeches than anything else,’ said the Senator. ‘ But if they ’re going to hunt, why don’t they hunt ? Have they got a fox with them ? ’ Then there was a further explanation.

At this moment there was a murmur as of a great coming arrival, and then an open carriage with four post-horses was brought at a quick trot into the open space. There were four men dressed for hunting inside, and two others on the box. They were all smoking, and all talking. It was easy to see that they did not consider themselves the least among those who were gathered together on this occasion. The carriage was immediately surrounded by grooms and horses, and the ceremony of disencumbering themselves of great-coats and aprons, of putting on spurs and fastening hat-strings was commenced. Then there were whispered communications from the grooms, and long faces under some of the hats. This horse hadn’t been fit since last Monday’s run, and that man’s hack wasn’t as it should be. A muttered curse might have been heard from one gentleman as he was told, on jumping from the box, that Harry Stubbings hadn’t sent him any second horse to ride. ‘ I didn’t hear nothing about it till yesterday, Captain,’ said Harry Stubbings, ‘ and every foot I had fit to come out was bespoke.’

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The groom, however, who heard this was quite aware that Mr. Stubbings did not wish to give unlimited credit to the captain, and he knew also that the second horse was to have carried his master the whole day, as the animal which was brought to the meet had been ridden hard on the previous Wednesday. At all this the Senator looked with curious eyes, thinking that he had never in his life seen brought together a set of more useless human beings.

‘That is Lord Rufford,’ said Morton, pointing to a stout, ruddy-faced, handsome man of about thirty, who was the owner of the carriage.

‘Oh, a lord. Do the lords hunt generally?’

‘That’s as they like it.’

‘Senators with us wouldn’t have time for that,’ said the Senator.

‘But you are paid to do your work.’

‘Everybody from whom work is expected should be paid. Then the work will be done, or those who pay will know the reason why.’

‘I must speak to Lord Rufford,’ said Morton. ‘If you’ll come with me, I’ll introduce you.’ The Senator followed willingly enough, and the introduction was made while his lordship was still standing by his horse. The two men had known each other in London, and it was natural that Morton, as owner of the ground, should come out and speak to the only man who knew him. It soon was spread about that the gentleman talking to Lord Rufford was John Morton, and many who lived in the county came up to shake

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hands with him. To some of these the Senator was introduced, and the conversation for a few minutes seemed to interrupt the business on hand. ‘I am sorry you should be on foot, Mr. Gotobed,’ said the lord.

‘And I am sorry that I cannot mount him,’ said Mr. Morton.

‘We can soon get over that difficulty if he will allow me to offer him a horse.’

The Senator looked as though he would almost like it, but he didn’t quite like it. ‘Perhaps your horse might kick me off, my lord.’

‘I can’t answer for that; but he isn’t given to kicking, and there he is, if you’ll get on him.’ But the Senator felt that the exhibition would suit neither his age nor position, and refused.

‘We’d better be moving,’ said Captain Glomax. ‘I suppose, Lord Rufford, we might as well trot over to Dillsborough Wood at once. I saw Bean as I came along, and he seemed to wish we should draw the wood first.’ Then there was a little whispering between his lordship and the master and Tony Tuppett. His lordship thought that as Mr. Morton was there the hounds might as well be run through the Bragton spinnies. Tony made a wry face and shook his head. He knew that though the Old Kennels might be a very good place for meeting there was no chance of finding a fox at Bragton. And Captain Glomax, who, being an itinerary master, had no respect whatever for a country gentleman who didn’t preserve, also made a long

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face and shook his head. But Lord Rufford, who knew the wisdom of reconciling a newcomer in the county to fox-hunting, prevailed, and the hounds and men were taken round a part of Bragton Park.

‘What’d t’old squire’ve said if he’d ’ve known there hadn’t been a fox at Bragton for more nor ten year?’ This remark was made by Tuppett to Mr. Runciman, who was riding by him. Mr. Runciman replied that there was a great difference in people. ‘You may say that, Mr. Runciman. It’s all changes. His lordship’s father couldn’t bear the sight of a hound nor a horse and saddle. Well;—I suppose I needn’t gammon any furder. We’ll just trot across to the wood at once.’

‘They haven’t begun yet as far as I can see,’ said Mr. Gotobed, standing up in the carriage.

‘They haven’t found as yet,’ replied Morton.

‘They must go on till they find a fox? They never bring him with them?’ Then there was an explanation as to bagged foxes, Morton not being very conversant with the subject he had to explain. ‘And if they shouldn’t find one all day?’

‘Then it ’ll be a blank.’

‘And these hundred gentlemen will go home quite satisfied with themselves?’

‘No;—they ’ll go home quite dissatisfied.’

‘And have paid their money and given their time for nothing? Do you know, it doesn’t seem to me the most heart-stirring thing in the world. Don’t they ride faster

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than that? ' At this moment Tony with the hounds at his heels was trotting across the park at a huntsman's usual pace from covert to covert. The Senator was certainly ungracious. Nothing that he saw produced from him a single word expressive of satisfaction.

Less than a mile brought them to the gate and road leading up to Chowton Farm. They passed close by Larry Twentyman's door, and not a few, though it was not yet more than half-past eleven, stopped to have a glass of Larry's beer. When the hounds were in the neighbourhood Larry's beer was always ready. But Tony and his attendants trotted by with eyes averted, as though no thought of beer was in their minds. Nothing had been done, and a huntsman is not entitled to beer till he has found a fox. Captain Glomax followed with Lord Rufford and a host of others. There was plenty of way here for carriages, and half a dozen vehicles passed through Larry's farmyard. Immediately behind the house was a meadow, and at the bottom of the meadow a stubble field, next to which was the ditch and bank which formed the bounds of Dillsborough Wood. Just at this side of the gate leading to the stubble field there was already a concourse of people when Tony arrived near it with the hounds, and immediately there was a holloaing and loud screeching of directions, which was soon understood to mean that the hounds were at once to be taken away! The Captain rode on rapidly, and then sharply gave his orders. Tony was to take the hounds back to Mr. Twentyman's farmyard as fast as he could, and shut them

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up in a barn. The whips were put into violent commotion. Tony was eagerly at work. Not a hound was to be allowed near the gate. And then, as the crowd of horsemen and carriages came on, the word ' poison ' was passed among them from mouth to mouth !

' What does all this mean ? ' said the Senator.

' I don't at all know. I 'm afraid there 's something wrong,' replied Morton.

' I heard that man say " poison." They have taken the dogs back again.' Then the Senator and Morton got out of the carriage, and made their way into the crowd. The riders who had grooms on second horses were soon on foot, and a circle was made, inside which there was some object of intense interest. In the meantime the hounds had been secured in one of Mr. Twentyman's barns.

What was that object of interest shall be told in the next chapter.

GOARLY'S REVENGE

The Senator and Morton followed close on the steps of Lord Rufford and Captain Glomax, and were thus able to make their way into the centre of the crowd. There, on a clean sward of grass, laid out as carefully as though he were a royal child prepared for burial, was—a dead fox. ' It 's p'ison, my lord ; it 's p'ison to a moral,' said Bean, who as keeper of the wood was bound to vindicate himself, and

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his master, and the wood. ‘Feel of him, how stiff he is.’ A good many did feel, but Lord Rufford stood still and looked at the poor victim in silence. ‘It’s easy knowing how he come by it,’ said Bean.

The men around gazed into each other’s faces with a sad, tragic air, as though the occasion were one which at the first blush was too melancholy for many words. There was whispering here and there, and one young farmer’s son gave a deep sigh, like a steam-engine beginning to work, and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand. ‘There ain’t nothin’ too bad—nothin’,’ said another, leaving his audience to imagine whether he were alluding to the wretchedness of the world in general, or to the punishment which was due to the perpetrator of this nefarious act. The dreadful word ‘vulpicide’ was heard from various lips with an oath or two before it. ‘It makes me sick of my own land, to think it should be done so near,’ said Larry Twentyman, who had just come up. Mr. Runciman declared that they must set their wits to work not only to find the criminal but to prove the crime against him, and offered to subscribe a couple of sovereigns on the spot to a common fund to be raised for the purpose. ‘I don’t know what is to be done with a country like this,’ said Captain Glomax, who, as an itinerant, was not averse to cast a slur upon the land of his present sojourn.

‘I don’t remember anything like it on my property before,’ said the lord, standing up for his own estate and the county at large.



“THE TISON, MY LORD.”

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‘Nor in the hunt,’ said young Hampton. ‘Of course such a thing may happen anywhere. They had foxes poisoned in the Pytchley last year.’

‘It shows a d—— bad feeling somewhere,’ said the master.

‘We know very well where the feeling is,’ said Bean, who had by this time taken up the fox, determined not to allow it to pass into any hands less careful than his own.

‘It’s that scoundrel Goarly !’ said one of the Botseys. Then there was an indignant murmur heard, first of all from two or three and then running among the whole crowd. Everybody knew as well as though he had seen it that Goarly had baited meat with strychnine and put it down in the wood. ‘Might have p’isoned half the pack !’ said Tony Tuppett, who had come up on foot from the barn where the hounds were still imprisoned, and had caught hold in an affectionate manner of a fore-pad of the fox which Bean had clutched by the two hind-legs. Poor Tony Tuppett almost shed tears as he looked at the dead animal, and thought what might have been the fate of the pack. ‘It’s him, my lord,’ he said, ‘as we run through Littleton Gorse Monday after Christmas last, and up to Impington Park where he got away from us in a hollow tree. He’s four year old,’ added Tony, looking at the animal’s mouth, ‘and there warn’t a finer dog fox in the county.’

‘Do they know all the foxes ?’ asked the Senator. In answer to this, Morton only shook his head, not feeling quite

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sure himself how far a huntsman's acquaintance in that line might go, and being also too much impressed by the occasion for speculative conversation.

'It's that scoundrel Goarly' had been repeated again and again ; and then on a sudden Goarly himself was seen standing on the further hedge of Larry's field with a gun in his hand. He was not at this time above two hundred yards from them, and was declared by one of the young farmers to be grinning with delight. The next field was Goarly's, but the hedge and ditch belonged to Twentyman. Larry rushed forward as though determined to thrash the man, and two or three followed him. But Lord Rufford galloped on and stopped them. 'Don't get into a row with a fellow like that,' he said to Twentyman.

'He's on my land, my lord,' said Larry impatiently.

'I'm on my own now, and let me see who'll dare to touch me,' said Goarly jumping down.

'You've put poison down in that wood,' said Larry.

'No, I didn't ;—but I knows who did. It ain't I as am afeard for my young turkeys.' Now it was well known that old Mrs. Twentyman, Larry's mother, was fond of young turkeys, and that her poultry-yard had suffered. Larry, in his determination to be a gentleman, had always laughed at his mother's losses. But now to be accused in this way was terrible to his feelings ! He made a rush as though to jump over the hedge, but Lord Rufford again intercepted him. 'I didn't think, Mr. Twentyman, that you'd care for what such a fellow as that might say.' By

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this time Lord Rufford was off his horse, and had taken hold of Larry.

‘I ’ll tell you all what it is,’ screamed Goarly, standing just at the end of his own field—‘if a hound comes out of the wood on to my land, I ’ll shoot him. I don’t know nothing about p’isoning, though I dare say Mr. Twentyman does. But if a hound comes on my land, I ’ll shoot him—open, before you all.’ There was, however, no danger of such a threat being executed on this day, as, of course, no hound would be allowed to go into Dillsborough Wood.

Twentyman was reluctantly brought back into the meadow where the horses were standing, and then a consultation was held as to what they should do next. There were some who thought that the hounds should be taken home for the day. It was as though some special friend of the U.R.U. had died that morning, and that the spirits of the sportsmen were too dejected for their sport. Others, with prudent foresight, suggested that the hounds might run back from some distant covert to Dillsborough, and that there should be no hunting till the wood had been thoroughly searched. But the strangers, especially those who had hired horses, would not hear of this ; and after considerable delay it was arranged that the hounds should be trotted off as quickly as possible to Impington Gorse, which was on the other side of Impington Park, and fully five miles distant. And so they started, leaving the dead fox in the hands of Bean the gamekeeper.

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‘ Is this the sort of thing that occurs every day ? ’ asked the Senator as he got back into the carriage.

‘ I should fancy not,’ answered Morton. ‘ Somebody has poisoned a fox, and I don’t think that is very often done about here.’

‘ Why did he poison him ? ’

‘ To save his fowls, I suppose.’

‘ Why shouldn’t he poison him if the fox takes his fowls ? Fowls are better than foxes.’

‘ Not in this country,’ said Morton.

‘ Then I ’m very glad I don’t live here,’ said Mr. Gotobed. ‘ These friends of yours are dressed very nicely and look very well—but a fox is a nasty animal. It was that man standing up on the bank—wasn’t it ? ’ continued the Senator, who was determined to understand it all to the very bottom, in reference to certain lectures which he intended to give on his return to the States—and perhaps also in the Old Country before he left it.

‘ They suspect him.’

‘ That man with the gun ! One man against two hundred ! Now I respect that man ;—I do with all my heart.’

‘ You ’d better not say so here, Mr. Gotobed.’

‘ I know how full of prejudice you all ’air—but I do respect him. If I comprehend the matter rightly, he was on his own land when we saw him.’

‘ Yes ;—that was his own field.’

‘ And they meant to ride across it whether he liked it or no ? ’

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‘Everybody rides across everybody’s land out hunting.’

‘Would they ride across your park, Mr. Morton, if you didn’t let them?’

‘Certainly they would—and break down all my gates if I had them locked, and pull down my park palings to let the hounds through.’

‘And you would get no compensation?’

‘Practically I could get none. And certainly I should not try. The greatest enemy to hunting in the whole county would not be foolish enough to make the attempt.’

‘Why so?’

‘He would get no satisfaction, and everybody would hate him.’

‘Then I respect that man the more. What is that man’s name?’ Morton hadn’t heard the name, or had forgotten it. ‘I shall find that man out, and have some conversation with him, Mr. Morton. I respect that man, Mr. Morton. He’s one against two hundred, and he insists upon his rights. These men standing round and wiping their eyes, and stifled with grief because a fox had been poisoned, as though some great patriot had died among them in the service of his country, formed one of the most remarkable phenomena, sir, that ever I beheld in any country. When I get among my own people in Mickewa and tell them that, they won’t believe me, sir.’

In the meantime the cavalcade was hurrying away to Impington Gorse, and John Morton, feeling that he had not had an opportunity as yet of showing his American friend

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the best side of hunting, went with them. The five miles were five long miles, and as the pace was not above seven miles an hour, nearly an hour was occupied. There was therefore plenty of opportunity for the Senator to inquire whether the gentlemen around him were as yet enjoying their sport. There was an air of triumph about him as to the misfortunes of the day, joined to a battery of continued raillery, which made it almost impossible for Morton to keep his temper. He asked whether it was not at any rate better than trotting a pair of horses backwards and forwards over the same mile of road for half the day, as is the custom in the States. But the Senator, though he did not quite approve of trotting matches, argued that there was infinitely more of skill and ingenuity in the American pastime. 'Everybody is so gloomy,' said the Senator, lighting his third cigar. 'I've been watching that young man in pink boots for the last half hour, and he hasn't spoken a word to any one.'

'Perhaps he's a stranger,' said Morton.

'And that's the way you treat him!'

It was past two when the hounds were put into the gorse, and certainly no one was in a very good humour. A trot of five miles is disagreeable, and two o'clock in November is late for finding a first fox, and then poisoning is a vice which may grow into a habit! There was a general feeling that Goarly ought to be extinguished, but an idea that it might be difficult to extinguish him. The whips, nevertheless, cantered on to the corner of the covert, and Tony

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put in his hounds with a cheery voice. The Senator remarked that the gorse was a very little place—for as they were on the side of an opposite hill they could see it all. Lord Rufford, who was standing by the carriage, explained to him that it was a favourite resort of foxes, and difficult to draw as being very close. ‘Perhaps they’ve poisoned him too,’ said the Senator. It was evident from his voice that had such been the case he would not have been among the mourners. ‘The blackguards are not thick enough in our country for that,’ said Lord Rufford, meaning to be sarcastic.

Then a whimper was heard from a hound—at first very low, and then growing into a fuller sound. ‘There he is,’ said young Hampton. ‘For heaven’s sake get those fellows away from that side, Glomax.’ This was uttered with so much vehemence that the Senator looked up in surprise. Then the Captain galloped round the side of the covert, and making use of some strong language, stopped the ardour of certain gentlemen who were in a hurry to get away on what they considered good terms. Lord Rufford, Hampton, Larry Twentyman, and others sat stock still on their horses, watching the gorse. Fred Botsey urged himself a little forward down the hill, and was creeping on when Captain Glomax asked him whether he would be so — obliging kind as to remain where he was for half a minute. Fred took the observations in good part and stopped his horse. ‘Does he do all that cursing and swearing for the £2000?’ asked the Senator.

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The fox traversed the gorse back from side to side and from corner to corner again and again. There were two sides certainly at which he might break, but though he came out more than once he could not be got to go away.

‘They ’ll kill him now before he breaks,’ said the elder Botsey.

‘Brute !’ exclaimed his brother.

‘They ’re hot on him now,’ said Hampton. At this time the whole side of the hill was ringing with the music of the hounds.

‘He was out then, but Dick turned him,’ said Larry. Dick was one of the whips.

‘Will you be so kind, Mr. Morton,’ asked the Senator, ‘as to tell me whether they ’re hunting yet ? They ’ve been at it for three hours and a half, and I should like to know when they begin to amuse themselves.’

Just as he had spoken there came from Dick a cry that he was away. Tony, who had been down at the side of the gorse, at once jumped into it, knowing the passage through. Lord Rufford, who for the last five or six minutes had sat perfectly still on his horse, started down the hill as though he had been thrown from a catapult. There was a little hand-gate through which it was expedient to pass, and in a minute a score of men were jostling for the way, among whom were the two Botseys, our friend Runciman, and Larry Twentyman, with Kate Masters on the pony close beside him. Young Hampton jumped a very nasty fence by the side of the wicket, and Lord Rufford followed him. A

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score of elderly men, with some young men among them too, turned back into a lane behind them, having watched long enough to see that they were to take the lane to the left, and not the lane to the right. After all there was time enough, for when the men had got through the hand-gate the hounds were hardly free of the covert, and Tony, riding up the side of the hill opposite, was still blowing his horn. But they were off at last, and the bulk of the field got away on good terms with the hounds. ‘Now they are hunting,’ said Mr. Morton to the Senator.

‘They all seemed to be very angry with each other at that narrow gate.’

‘They were in a hurry, I suppose.’

‘Two of them jumped over the hedge. Why didn’t they all jump? How long will it be now before they catch him?’

‘Very probably they may not catch him at all.’

‘Not catch him after all that! Then the man was certainly right to poison that other fox in the wood. How long will they go on?’

‘Half an hour perhaps.’

‘And you call that hunting! Is it worth the while of all those men to expend all that energy for such a result? Upon the whole, Mr. Morton, I should say that it is one of the most incomprehensible things that I have ever seen in the course of a rather long and varied life. Shooting I can understand, for you have your birds. Fishing I can understand, as you have your fish. Here you get a fox to begin with, and are all broken-hearted. Then you come across

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another, after riding about all day, and the chances are you can't catch him ! '

' I suppose,' said Mr. Morton angrily, ' the habits of one country are incomprehensible to the people of another. When I see Americans loafing about in the bar-room of an hotel, I am lost in amazement.'

' There is not a man you see who couldn't give a reason for his being there. He has an object in view—though perhaps no better than to rob his neighbour. But here there seems to be no possible motive.'

FROM IMPINGTON GORSE

The fox ran straight from the covert through his well-known haunts to Impington Park, and as the hounds were astray there for two or three minutes there was a general idea that he too had got up into a tree—which would have amused the Senator very much had the Senator been there. But neither had the country nor the pace been adapted to wheels, and the Senator and the Paragon were now returning along the road towards Bragton. The fox had tried his old earths at Impington High Wood, and had then skulked back along the outside of the covert. Had not one of the whips seen him he would have been troubled no further on that day—a fact which, if it could have been explained to the Senator in all its bearings, would greatly have added to his delight. But Dick viewed him ; and with many holloas

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and much blowing of horns, and prayers from Captain Glomax that gentlemen would only be so good as to hold their tongues, and a full-tongued volley of abuse from half the field against an unfortunate gentleman who rode after the escaping fox before a hound was out of the covert, they settled again to their business. It was pretty to see the quiet ease and apparent nonchalance, and almost affected absence of bustle of those who knew their work—among whom were especially to be named young Hampton, and the elder Botsey, and Lord Rufford, and, above all, a dark-visaged, long-whiskered, sombre, military man, who had been in the carriage with Lord Rufford, and who had hardly spoken a word to any one the whole day. This was the celebrated Major Caneback, known to all the world as one of the dullest men and best riders across country that England had ever produced. But he was not so dull but that he knew how to make use of his accomplishment, so as always to be able to get a mount on a friend's horses. If a man wanted to make a horse, or to try a horse, or to sell a horse, or to buy a horse, he delighted to put Major Caneback up. The Major was sympathetic and made his friend's horses, and tried them, and sold them. Then he would take his two bottles of wine—of course from his friend's cellar—and when asked about the day's sport would be oracular in two words, 'Rather slow,' 'Quick spurt,' 'Goodish thing,' 'Regularly mulled,' and such like. Nevertheless it was a great thing to have Major Caneback with you. To the list of those who rode well and quietly must in justice be added

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our friend Larry Twentyman, who was in truth a good horseman. And he had three things to do which it was difficult enough to combine. He had a young horse which he would have liked to sell ; he had to coach Kate Masters on his pony ; and he desired to ride like Major Caneback.

From Impington Park they went in a straight line to Littleton Gorse, skirting certain small woods which the fox disdained to enter. Here the pace was very good, and the country was all grass. It was the very cream of the U.R.U. ; and could the Senator have read the feelings of the dozen leading men in the run, he would have owned that they were for the time satisfied with their amusement. Could he have read Kate Masters' feelings he would have had to own that she was in an earthly Paradise. When the pony paused at the big brook, brought its four legs steadily down on the brink as though he were going to bathe, then with a bend of his back leapt to the other side, dropping his hind-legs and instantly recovering them, and when she saw that Larry had waited just a moment for her, watching to see what might be her fate, she was in heaven. ‘Wasn’t it a big one, Larry ?’ she asked in her triumph ; ‘he did go in behind !’ ‘Those cats of things always do it somehow,’ Larry replied, darting forward again, and keeping the Major well in his eye. The brook had stopped one or two, and tidings came up that Ned Botsey had broken his horse’s back. The knowledge of the brook had sent some round by the road—steady riding men such as Mr. Runciman and Doctor Napper. Captain Glomax had got into it, and



LARRY AND KATE MASTERS.



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came up afterwards wet through, with temper by no means improved. But the glory of the day had been the way in which Lord Rufford's young bay mare, who had never seen a brook before, had flown over it with the Major on her back, taking it, as Larry afterwards described, 'just in her stride, without condescending to look at it. I was just behind the Major, and saw her do it.' Larry understood that a man should never talk of his own place in a run, but he didn't quite understand that neither should he talk of having been close to another man who was supposed to have had the best of it. Lord Rufford, who didn't talk much of these things, quite understood that he had received full value for his billet and mount in the improved character of his mare.

Then there was a little difficulty at the boundary fence of Impington Hall Farm. The Major, who didn't know the ground, tried it at an impracticable place, and brought his mare down. But she fell at the right side, and he was quick enough in getting away from her, not to fall under in the ditch. Tony Tuppett, who knew every foot of that double ditch and bank, and every foot in the hedge above, kept well to the left and crept through a spot where one ditch ran into the other, intersecting the fence. Tony, like a knowing huntsman as he was, rode always for the finish and not for immediate glory. Both Lord Rufford and Hampton, who in spite of their affected nonchalance were in truth rather riding against one another, took it all in a fly, choosing a lighter spot than that which the Major had encountered.

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Larry had longed to follow them, or rather to take it alongside of them, but was mindful at last of Kate, and hurried down the ditch to the spot Tony had chosen, and which was now crowded by horsemen. 'He would have done it as well as the best of them,' said Kate, panting for breath.

'We 're all right,' said Larry. 'Follow me. Don't let them hustle you out. Now, Mat, can't you make way for a lady half a minute?' Mat growled, quite understanding the use which was being made of Kate Masters; but he did give way and was rewarded with a gracious smile. 'You are going uncommon well, Miss Kate,' said Mat, 'and I won't stop you.' 'I am so much obliged to you, Mr. Ruggles,' said Kate, not scrupling for a moment to take the advantage offered her. The fox had turned a little to the left, which was in Larry's favour, and the Major was now close to him, covered on one side with mud, but still looking as though the mud were all right. There are some men who can crush their hats, have their boots and breeches full of water, and be covered with dirt from their faces downwards, and yet look as though nothing were amiss, while, with others, the marks of a fall are always provocative either of pity or ridicule. 'I hope you 're not hurt, Major Caneback,' said Larry, glad of the occasion to speak to so distinguished an individual. The Major grunted as he rode on, finding no necessity here even for his customary two words. Little accidents, such as that, were the price he paid for his day's entertainment.

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As they got within view of Littleton Gorse, Hampton, Lord Rufford, and Tony had the best of it, though two or three farmers were very close to them. At this moment Tony's mind was much disturbed, and he looked round more than once for Captain Glomax. Captain Glomax had got into the brook, and had then ridden down to the high road which ran here near to them, and which, as he knew, ran within one field of the gorse. He had lost his place and had got a ducking, and was a little out of humour with things in general. It had not been his purpose to go to Impington on this day, and he was still, in his mind, saying evil things of the U.R.U. respecting that poisoned fox. Perhaps he was thinking, as itinerant masters often must think, that it was very hard to have to bear so many unpleasant things for a poor £2000 a year, and meditating, as he had done for the last two seasons, a threat that unless the money were increased, he wouldn't hunt the country more than three times a week. As Tony got near to the gorse, and also near to the road, he managed with infinite skill to get the hounds off the scent, and to make a fictitious cast to the left as though he thought the fox had traversed that way. Tony knew well enough that the fox was at that moment in Littleton Gorse ; but he knew also that the gorse was only six acres, that such a fox as he had before him wouldn't stay there two minutes after the first hound was in it, and that Dillsborough Wood—which to his imagination was full of poison—would then be only a mile and a half before him. Tony, whose fault was a tendency to mystery—as is the fault of

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most huntsmen—having accomplished his object in stopping the hounds, pretended to cast about with great diligence. He crossed the road, and was down one side of a field and along another, looking anxiously for the Captain. ‘ The fox has gone on to the gorse,’ said the elder Botsey ; ‘ what a stupid old pig he is ’—meaning that Tony Tuppett was the pig.

‘ He was seen going on,’ said Larry, who had come across a man mending a drain.

‘ It would be his run, of course,’ said Hampton, who was generally up to Tony’s wiles, but who was now as much in the dark as others. Then four or five rode up to the huntsman, and told him that the fox had been seen heading for the gorse. Tony said not a word, but bit his lips and scratched his head and bethought himself what fools men might be even though they did ride well to hounds. One word of explanation would have settled it all, but he would not speak that word till he whispered it to Captain Glomax.

In the meantime there was a crowd in the road waiting to see the result of Tony’s manœuvres. And then, as is usual on such occasions, a little mild repartee went about—what sportsmen themselves would have called ‘ chaff.’ Ned Botsey came up, not having broken his horse’s back, as had been rumoured, but having had to drag the brute out of the brook with the help of two countrymen, and the Major was asked about his fall till he was forced to open his mouth. ‘ Double ditch ;—mare fell ;—matter of course.’ And then

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he got himself out of the crowd, disgusted with the littleness of mankind. Lord Rufford had been riding a very big chestnut horse, and had watched the anxious struggles of Kate Masters to hold her place. Kate, though fifteen, and quite up to that age in intelligence and impudence, was small and looked almost a child. ‘That’s a nice pony of yours, my dear,’ said the lord. Kate, who didn’t quite like being called ‘my dear,’ but who knew that a lord has privileges, said that it was a very good pony. ‘Suppose we change,’ said his lordship. ‘Could you ride my horse?’ ‘He’s very big,’ said Kate. ‘You’d look like a tom-tit on a haystack,’ said his lordship. ‘And if you got on my pony, you’d look like a haystack on a tom-tit,’ said Kate. Then it was felt that Kate Masters had had the best of that little encounter. ‘Yes;—I got one there,’ said Lord Rufford, while his friends were laughing at him.

At length Captain Glomax was seen in the road and Tony was with him at once, whispering in his ear that the hounds if allowed to go on would certainly run into Dillsborough Wood. ‘D—— the hounds,’ muttered the Captain; but he knew too well what he was about to face so terrible a danger. ‘They’re going home,’ he said as soon as he had joined Lord Rufford and the crowd.

‘Going home!’ exclaimed a pink-coated young rider of a hired horse which had been going well with him; and as he said so he looked at his watch.

‘Unless you particularly wish me to take the hounds to

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some covert some twenty miles off,' answered the sarcastic master.

'The fox certainly went on to Littleton,' said the elder Botsey.

'My dear fellow,' said the Captain, 'I can tell you where the fox went quite as well as you can tell me. Do allow a man to know what he 's about sometimes.'

'It isn't generally the custom here to take the hounds off a running fox,' continued Botsey, who subscribed £50, and did not like being snubbed.

'And it isn't generally the custom to have fox-coverts poisoned,' said the Captain, assuming to himself the credit due to Tony's sagacity. 'If you wish to be master of these hounds I haven't the slightest objection, but while I 'm responsible you must allow me to do my work according to my own judgment.' Then the thing was understood, and Captain Glomax was allowed to carry off the hounds and his ill-humour without another word.

But just at this moment, while the hounds and the master, and Lord Rufford and his friends, were turning back in their own direction, John Morton came up with his carriage and the Senator.

'All over for to-day,' said Lord Rufford.

'Did you catch the animal ? '

'No, Mr. Gotobed ; we couldn't catch him. To tell the truth we didn't try ; but we had a nice little skurry for four or five miles.'

'Some of you look very wet.' Captain Glomax and Ned

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Botsey were standing near the carriage ; but the Captain, as soon as he heard this, broke into a trot and followed the hounds.

‘ Some of us are very wet,’ said Ned. ‘ That’s part of the fun.’

‘ Oh ;—that’s part of the fun. You found one fox dead and you didn’t kill another because you didn’t try. Well ; Mr. Morton, I don’t think I shall take to fox-hunting even though they should introduce it to Mickewa. What’s become of the rest of the men ? ’

‘ Most of them are in the brook,’ said Ned Botsey as he rode on towards Dillsborough.

Mr. Runciman was also there and trotted on homewards with Botsey, Larry, and Kate Masters. ‘ I think I’ve won my bet,’ said the hotel-keeper.

‘ I don’t see that at all. We didn’t find in Dillsborough Wood.’

‘ I say we did find in Dillsborough Wood. We found a fox, though unfortunately the poor brute was dead.’

‘ The bet’s off, I should say. What do you say, Larry ? ’

Then Runciman argued his case at great length and with much ability. It had been intended that the bet should be governed by the fact whether Dillsborough Wood did or did not contain a fox on that morning. He himself had backed the wood, and Botsey had been strong in his opinion against the wood. Which of them had been practically right ? Had not the presence of the poisoned fox shown that he was right ? ‘ I think you ought to pay,’ said Larry.

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‘All right,’ said Botsey riding on, and telling himself that that was what came from making a bet with a man who was not a gentleman.

‘He’s as unhappy about that hat,’ said Runciman, ‘as though beer had gone down a penny a gallon.’

Trifolium pratense



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